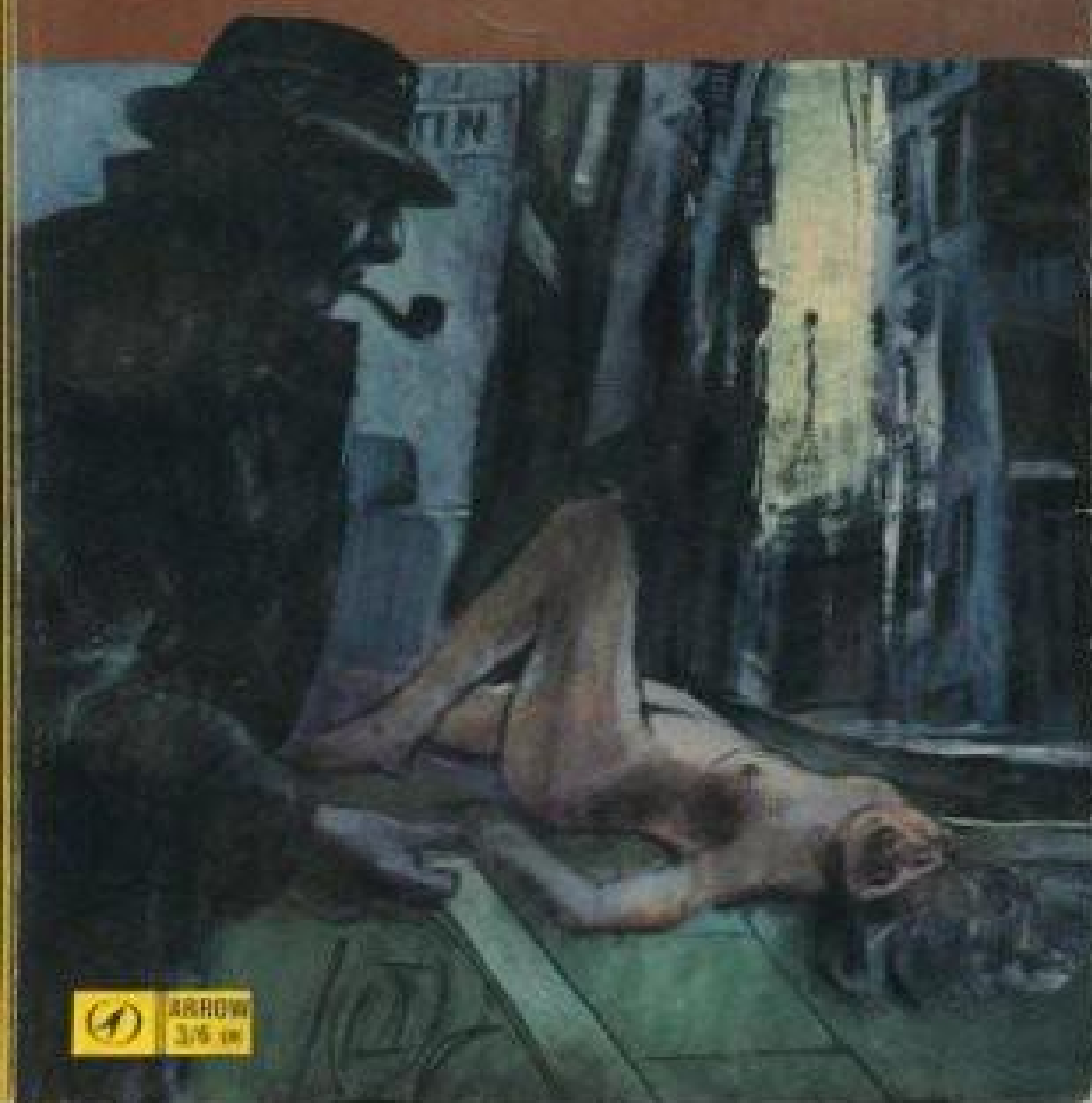


S I M E N O N  
**MAIGRET'S**  
**LITTLE JOKE**

But why the devil was she naked?



ARROW  
3/8 in

# Maigret's Little Joke

*MAIGRET SE AMUSE*

*THE 78TH EPISODE IN THE MAIGRET SAGA*

1956

*Georges Simenon*

Translated from the French by Richard Brain

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*A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book*

*Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.*

NEW YORK

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## MAIGRET'S LITTLE JOKE

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### I

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The little old man with the small goatee beard was again emerging from the shadow of the warehouse, backwards, looking to left and right, with a movement of both hands as if to draw towards himself the heavy lorry whose manoeuvre he was guiding. His hands were saying :

“A bit to the right... That’s it... Straighten up... Gently... To the left... now... Hold it...”

And the lorry, also in reverse, was clumsily cutting across the pavement, turning into the street, where the little old man now was waving to the cars to stop a moment.

This was the third lorry to come out in this fashion, within half an hour, from the vast pedimented depot on which was written *Catoire & Potut, Metals*, familiar words to Maigret, since he had looked down at them every day for more than thirty years.

He was at his window, in the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir, smoking a pipe in slow puffs, without coat or tie on, and behind him in the bedroom his wife was starting to make the bed.

He was not ill, and that was what made it unusual, for it was ten o’clock in the morning and this wasn’t even Sunday.

Being at the window, right in the middle of the morning, able to let his eyes wander over the to-and-fro of the street, to watch the lorries entering and emerging from the warehouse opposite, gave him a sensation which took him back to certain days in his childhood, when his mother was still alive and he was not going to school, because of a cold, or because term had ended. The sensation, in a way, of discovering “what went on when he wasn’t there”.

By now it was the third day—the second if Sunday didn’t count— and he was still experiencing a mixture of delight and

vague uneasiness.

He was making lots of discoveries, being interested not only in the movements of the little old man with the goatee beard who presided over the departure of the lorries, but also, for example, in the number of customers who made their way into the bistro next door.

He had had occasion before to spend all day in his flat. Almost always it was because he was ill, and he would be in bed or in an armchair.

This once, he was not ill. He had nothing to do. He could spend his time as he liked. He was learning the rhythm of his wife's day, where she started her work, at what moment she would leave the kitchen for the bedroom, and the order in which she did her successive jobs.

All of a sudden she called to mind his mother attending to her housework, whilst, there too, he used to hang about the window.

Like her, Madame Maigret was saying to him :

"Now you'll have to move out of the light so that I can sweep."

Even the smell of the kitchen was changing too: this morning it was the, smell of *fricandeau à l'oseille*.

He was beginning to notice again, like a child, certain tricks of the light, the advance on the pavement of the line between shadow and sunlight, the way things are distorted in the quivering atmosphere of a hot day.

There would be another seventeen days of this.

Of course there had to be a series of chances and coincidences for this to come about. And it all began in March when he had bronchitis rather badly. He had got up too soon, as always, because work was pressing at the Quai des Orfèvres. He had had to take to his bed a second time and for a while an attack of pleurisy was feared.

Days of fine weather had restored his health, but he had remained worried, depressed, ill at ease with himself. He

suddenly felt himself an old man and it seemed that the real illness, the one which wears you away for the rest of your days, was waiting for him just around the corner.

He had said nothing of this to his wife, and it therefore irritated him to see her watching him out of the corner of her eye. One evening he had been to see his friend Pardon, the doctor in the Rue Picpus, at whose house they regularly dined once a month.

Pardon had given him a lengthy examination, had even, to satisfy his conscience, sent him to a heart specialist.

The medicos had found nothing, beyond a slightly high blood pressure, but they had jointly agreed on the same advice:

“You ought to take a holiday.”

For three years he had not enjoyed a real holiday. Each time he was on the point of setting out, an enquiry arose which he was obliged to take up, and once when he had already arrived at his sister-in-law's, in Alsace, he had received, on the first day there, a frantic telephone call summoning him back to Paris.

“All right,” he had promised his friend Pardon, grumbling. “This year I will take a holiday, whatever happens.”

In June, he had fixed the date for it: August 1st. His wife had written to her sister. The latter, who lived in Colmar with her husband and their children, owned a chalet on the Col de la Schlucht, where the Maigrets had been fairly often and where life was pleasant and restful. Alas! Charles, the brother-in-law, had just gained possession of his new car and had decided to take his family on a trip to Italy.

How many evenings had they spent, Madame Maigret and he, discussing which place to go to? To start with, they had thought of somewhere on the banks of the Loire, where Maigret would be able to fish, then of the Hôtel des Roches Noires at Les Sables d'Olonne where they had once spent an excellent holiday. They had finally plumped for Les Sables. Madame Maigret had written in the last week of June, only to be told that all the rooms were booked until August 18th.

In the end mere chance had prompted the chief-inspector's decision. One Saturday evening, in the middle of July, he had been called, at about seven o'clock, to the Gare de Lyon, on a case of no great importance. From the Quai des Orfèvres to the station had taken half an hour in one of the squad cars, such was the packed mass of vehicles.

Eight relief trains were announced to be running and the crowd in the ticket-hall, on the platforms, everywhere, with suitcases, trunks, bundles, children, dogs and fishing-rods, suggested an exodus.

The whole lot were on their way to the country or to the seaside, where they would invade the smallest hotels, the simplest inns, not to mention those who would be pitching their tents as soon as they could discover an available space.

It was a hot summer. Maigret had returned home jaded, as if he had himself been immured in an overnight train.

"What's wrong with you?" asked his wife, who had continued to be concerned about him since his bronchitis.

"I'm beginning to wonder whether we shall go away for a holiday."

"Have you forgotten what Pardon told you?"

"I've not forgotten."

He was picturing with horror the hotels, the boarding-houses crammed with visitors.

"Wouldn't we do better to spend our holiday in Paris?"

She had thought at first that he was joking.

"We practically never go for a walk together in Paris. We're lucky if we manage once in the week to find time to go as far as one of the cinemas on the Boulevards. In August we shall have the empty town to ourselves."

"And the first thing you'll do will be to rush off to the Quai des Orfèvres to get mixed up in some case or other!"

"I swear not to."

"That's what you say now."

“We could go off together wherever we liked, in parts where we normally never set foot, have lunch and dinner in funny little restaurants...”

“If they know you’re here, Police Headquarters will be telephoning you at the first opportunity.”

“Headquarters won’t know, or anyone else, and I’ll tell the telephone messages service that we’re away.”

He was really falling in love with the idea and in the end his wife was won over too. As a result the telephone, in the dining-room, was silent, another detail which it was hard to get used to. Twice he had reached out his hand to the receiver before remembering that he mustn’t do so.

Officially, he was not in Paris. He was at Les Sables d’Olonne. That was the address he had left with Police Headquarters, and if an urgent message arrived for him down there, it would be forwarded on to him.

He had left the Quai des Orfèvres on Saturday evening and everyone thought he was off to the seaside. On Sunday they had not been out until near the end of the afternoon, to have dinner at a brasserie in the Place des Ternes, a good way from home, as if to move on to strange ground.

On Monday morning, around half-past ten, Maigret had gone down as far as the Place de la République, while his wife was finishing the housework, and had read his newspapers on a more or less deserted café terrace. They had lunched later on at the Villette, had dined at home and gone to the cinema.

They didn’t know yet, either of them, what they would do today, Tuesday, except that they were going to eat the *fricandeau* at home and afterwards go out for a stroll.

It was a rhythm of life to which it took some time to grow accustomed, since it seemed strange not to be driven by various obligations, not to have to reckon the hours and minutes.

He was not bored. To tell the truth, he was really slightly ashamed of not doing anything. Was his wife aware of it?

“Aren’t you going to fetch your papers?”



A habit was already being formed. At half-past ten, he would go and fetch his newspapers, probably read them at the same café terrace on the Place de la République. He enjoyed this. After all, he had only just escaped from contingencies that forced him to be a maker of news himself.

He left the window, put on a tie and shoes, then fetched his hat.

“You needn’t be back before half-past twelve.”

Even for her, he was no longer altogether Maigret, now that he was not going off to the Quai des Orfèvres, and once more he thought of his mother calling out to him:

“Go off and play for an hour, but be back in time for lunch.”

Even the concierge looked at him in surprise, not without a hint of disapproval. A great man big like him, is he entitled to wander about without anything to do?

A municipal water-cart was driving slowly past and he watched, as if it were something never seen before, the way the water spurted through a multitude of tiny holes and then spread out over the roadway.

The windows, at Police Headquarters, must have been wide open to face the view of the Seine. Half the offices were empty. Lucas was at Pau, where he had relations, and would not return until the 15th. Torrence, who had lately bought a second-hand car, was touring Normandy and Brittany.

There was scarcely any traffic, very few taxis. The Place de la République seemed as motionless as on a picture post-card and only one coachful of tourists lent it animation.

He stopped at the kiosk, bought all the morning newspapers which he usually found in his office and skimmed through before starting work.

As it was, he had time to read them, and the day before he had even read a good deal of the personal column.

He took a seat on the same terrace, in the same place, ordered a beer, and after removing his hat and wiping his brow, since it was already hot, he unfolded his first newspaper.

The two main headlines dealt with international events and a serious motor accident in which eight people had been killed, for a bus had fallen down a ravine not far from Grenoble.

Straight away his eye was caught by another heading, in the right-hand corner of the page.

### CORPSE IN A CUPBOARD

If his nostrils did not exactly twitch, he none the less felt a certain excitement.

Police Headquarters are maintaining a good deal of secrecy concerning a gruesome discovery made yesterday morning, Monday, in the flat of a well-known doctor, in the Boulevard Haussmann. The doctor in question is said to be at present on the Côte d'Azur with his wife and daughter.

When she went to work yesterday morning, after spending Sunday with her family, the maid is reported to have been struck by a suspicious smell, and on opening a cupboard from which this smell seemed to be issuing, she discovered the corpse of a young woman.

Contrary to their traditional attitude, Police Headquarters are showing themselves particularly grudging with information, which leaves us to suppose that they attach unusual importance to this case.

The doctor involved, Dr. J—, has been urgently recalled and another doctor, his locum-tenens during his holiday, is reported to be implicated.

We hope tomorrow to be in a position to furnish the details of this peculiar story.

Maigret unfolded the other two morning papers he had bought.

One of them had missed this piece of news. The other, informed at the last minute, summarized it in a few lines, but under a heading in heavy type.

### A CORPSE AT THE DOCTOR'S

Police Headquarters have since yesterday been conducting an investigation into a case which might

easily become a second Petiot case, but for the difference, this time, that two doctors instead of only one appear to be involved. The fact is that the corpse of a young woman has been discovered in the surgery of a well-known Boulevard Haussmann practitioner, but so far we have not been able to obtain any further information.

Maigret caught himself muttering :

“Idiot!”

It wasn't the journalists he was annoyed with but Janvier, who for the first time had the weight of the police force's responsibilities on his shoulders. The detective-inspector had been waiting for ages for this opportunity, since at the times of Maigret's previous holidays there had always been a detective of longer service to replace the chief-inspector. This year, for nearly three weeks, he was chief, and Maigret had scarcely departed from Police Headquarters when a case had burst into the light, an important one, to judge from the little the newspapers could so far say about it.

But Janvier had already committed his first mistake : he had put the journalists' backs up. Maigret too had in the past had occasion to conceal information from them, but he would always do so gently, and even when he was telling them nothing, he still seemed to be taking them into his confidence.

His first urge was to go to the telephone box and ring Janvier. He remembered in time that he was officially at Les Sables d'Olonne.

The discovery of the corpse, according to the papers, occurred the morning of the day before. The police had at once been apprised of the affair, and so had the Public Prosecutor's office. In the normal course of events Monday afternoon's papers should have published the news.

Had someone in high places intervened? Or had Janvier taken it upon himself to impose silence?

“*A well-known doctor in the Boulevard Haussmann. ...*”  
Maigret knew the district well, and when he had first arrived in Paris, it was probably that part which had most impressed

him with its staid handsome buildings, its gateways giving glimpses of old stables at the end of courtyards, the lovely shade of chestnut-trees and the limousines parked all along the pavements.

“May I use the telephone?”

Not to ring up Police Headquarters, since that was forbidden him, but to call Pardon, who had stayed at the seaside during July and was the only person acquainted with Maigret’s Parisian holiday.

Pardon was in his surgery.

“Tell me, do you know a doctor beginning with J who lives in the Boulevard Haussmann?”

The doctor had also had time to read the newspaper.

“I asked myself that very question over breakfast. I looked up the Medical Register. I was rather intrigued. It appears, in fact, that it’s a highly respected doctor involved, Dr. Jave, a former hospital surgeon, who now has a large private practice.”

“Do you know him?”

“I’ve met him two or three times, but I haven’t set eyes on him for several years now.”

“What sort of man?”

“Do you mean, in the profession?”

“In the first place, yes.”

“A sound practitioner, who knows his job. He must be in his forties, probably forty-five. He’s a good-looking man. All one could hold against him, so far as it is a fault, is that he has specialized in patients from high society. It’s not for nothing that he’s set up in practice in the Boulevard Haussmann. I imagine he makes a lot of money.”

“Married?”

“So the paper says. I hadn’t heard about it. Look here, Maigret, I hope you’re not going to go running round to Headquarters to get yourself involved in this?”

“I give you my promise. What about the other doctor they refer to?”

“I haven’t been the only one this morning to telephone his colleagues. It’s pretty unusual for a business of this sort to occur in our profession and we’re as curious as concierges. Like most doctors going off on holiday, Jave took on a young locum for the time he would be away. I don’t know him personally and I don’t think I’ve met him. It’s a chap called Négrel, Gilbert Négrel, who’s about 30 and is one of Professor Lebier’s assistants. That’s a recommendation, as Lebier is known to be fussy about choosing his associates and to be difficult to live with.”

“Are you very busy?”

“Right now?”

“Generally speaking.”

“Less than usual, as most of my patients are on holiday. Why do you ask?”

“I’d like to try and obtain as much information as possible about these two medicos.”

“You’re not forgetting you’re on holiday, on doctor’s orders?”

“I promise not to set foot in Police Headquarters.”

“Which isn’t going to prevent your looking into the case as an amateur. Is that it?”

“Roughly.”

“Right. I’ll make a few telephone calls.”

“Could we perhaps meet this evening?”

“Why don’t you come and have dinner with us at home and bring your wife?”

“No. I’m asking you to come with yours to a bistro somewhere. We’ll come and collect you about eight o’clock.”

There and then Maigret ceased to be quite the same man he had been first thing that morning. He had stopped day-

dreaming and feeling like a little boy not going to school.

He went back to his place on the terrace, ordered another glass of beer and thought of Janvier, who was bound to be in a terrible state of excitement. Had Janvier attempted to telephone, him at Les Sables d'Olonne to ask his advice? Probably not. His heart would be set upon conducting the case, all by himself, to a successful conclusion.

The chief-inspector was impatient to know more about it, but since he was for the time being no longer behind the scenes, he had to do as the rest of the public, wait for the papers in the afternoon.

When he returned home for lunch, his wife looked at him with a frown, already sensing something in the wind.

“You’ve met somebody?”

“Not a soul. I’ve only telephoned to Pardon. We’re taking them out to dinner this evening in some bistro, I haven’t decided where yet.”

“Are you feeling all right?”

“I’m in fine form.”

It was true. This short news-item in the newspaper had just given a point to his holiday and he wasn’t tempted to go to his office and take charge of the case. For once, he was merely a spectator and he was finding the situation amusing.

“What are we doing this afternoon?”

“We’ll go and take a walk along the Boulevard Haussmann and round that district.”

She made no objection, didn’t ask him why. They had plenty of time to eat their meal without watching the clock, in front of the open window, which they didn’t often have the chance to do. Even the noises of Paris were not the same as usual. Instead of forming a confused symphony, the sounds, occurring less frequently, were becoming distinct; a taxi could be heard turning the corner of such and such a street, a lorry drawing up outside a particular house.

“You’re not going to have a nap?”

“No.”

While she was busy washing up, then changing, he went downstairs once more to go and buy the evening papers. The case had become entitled to larger headlines.

NEW PETIOT MURDER CASE  
WOMAN FOUND DEAD IN CUPBOARD  
TWO DOCTORS QUESTIONED

The best of the articles, above the signature of little Lassagne, one of the sharpest-witted reporters, said :

A murder case, which cannot fail to be widely discussed and hold some surprises in store, has come to light in one of the smartest neighbourhoods of Paris, in the Boulevard Haussmann, between the Rue de Miromesnil and the Rue de Courcelles.

Despite the unwillingness the police have shown in providing information, we have been able, thanks to our own personal enquiries, to discover the following details.

The second floor of No. 137 *bis*, Boulevard Haussmann, has been occupied for the past five years by Dr. Philippe Jave, aged forty-four, together with his wife and their three-year-old daughter.

The Javes live in one of the two flats on the floor, the other being kept for the waiting-room and the luxurious consulting-rooms, for the doctor's practice is one of the smartest and the majority of his patients feature in the Bottin Social Register.

On July 1st the Javes, accompanied by the child's nurse, left Paris for a six weeks' stay at Cannes, where they had rented the Villa Marie-Thérèse.

On the same date a young doctor, Dr. Négrel, took over his colleague's place during consulting hours.

Normally, apart from the nurse, Mlle. Jusserand, the Javes have two servants, but one of them, whose parents live in Normandy, took her holidays at the same time as her employers, and only Josépha Chauvet, fifty-one years old, remained in Paris.

The living quarters being unoccupied, she only had to take charge of looking after the professional rooms.

Dr. Négrel, who is a bachelor and lives in rooms in the Rue des Saints-Pères, has been coming every morning at nine o'clock, taking note of any telephone calls, doing visits round the town, lunching in a restaurant, and at two o'clock returning to the Boulevard Haussmann for consultations.

About six o'clock, he was free once more and Josépha Chauvet has been taking advantage of it to go and visit her daughter, who lives in the district, in the Rue Washington, where she spent nearly every night.

What happened? Because of the silence on the part of the police, it is difficult for us to reconstruct the chain of events, but a certain number of facts have been ascertained.

Last Saturday, Dr. Négrel left the surgery in the Boulevard Haussmann at half-past five, when Josépha was still there. During the course of the afternoon he had seen some half-dozen patients, of both sexes, and no one in the building had noticed any unusual arrivals or departures.

On Sunday Dr. Négrel went to visit some friends in the country, while Josépha spent the day with her daughter in the Rue Washington, not returning till eight a.m. on Monday.

She started as usual by running the vacuum-cleaner round the waiting-room, then she went through into the office which leads into the consulting-room.

It was only on reaching this third room that she was struck by an unusual smell, "stale and sickly", as she put it, but she did not trouble about it straight away.

Eventually, a few minutes before nine o'clock, intrigued she opened the door into a fourth room, less spacious than the others, which had been turned into a laboratory. It was there that the smell was coming from; to be precise, from one of the cupboards.

It was locked. The key was not in the keyhole. As Josépha was examining the cupboard, she heard footsteps



behind her, and turning round, she caught sight of Dr. Négrel arriving.

Did he give a start? Did he turn pale? The pieces of indirect evidence we have collected are contradictory. He is supposed to have said:

“What are you doing there?”

And she to have replied :

“Can’t you smell anything?”

She is said to have suggested a dead rat.

“Didn’t Dr. Jave leave you the keys?”

It must be understood that we are only reconstructing the facts as best we can. A few minutes later, Josépha left the building to go and fetch a locksmith from the Rue de Miromesnil and subsequently returned with him. Maigret wondered, as he read, where little Lassagne had unearthed these details. It wasn’t Josépha who had talked, he would have sworn. Still less Dr. Négrel. The concierge? It was possible. Perhaps also, from what followed, the locksmith? He read on:

When the cupboard door was opened, they were confronted by the sight of the body of a woman completely naked, which had had to be bent double to fit into the rather confined space.

In the absence of Chief-Detective-Inspector Maigret on holiday it was Inspector Janvier who arrived on the spot, accompanied by the police doctor and representatives from the Public Prosecutor’s Office, whilst the Press, for reasons which we still do not understand, were kept in the dark.

The identification of the body caused no difficulty since it was that of Mme. Jave herself, believed by everybody to have been at Cannes.

Apart from a contusion on the right temple, which could have been brought on by a fall, the corpse bears no mark of violence.

Dr. Négrel claims not to have seen Mme. Jave either on Saturday or any other day since the departure of Dr. Jave and his wife, on July 1st, for Cannes.

Josépha is reported to have made a similar statement.

How was the young woman killed? When? We are fairly certain that the police doctor has placed the time of death sometime on Saturday.

At noon on Monday, Dr. Jave, who had been notified by telephone, took the Paris plane from Nice.

He spent the night, as did Dr. Négrel, at the Quai des Orfèvres. Nothing has transpired concerning the statements which the two men are supposed to have made.

Even this morning Police Headquarters have refused to tell us whether either of the two men has been placed under arrest.

Judge Comélieau has been authorized to conduct the preliminary examination and he is maintaining even stricter silence than Inspector Janvier.

Our Cannes correspondent has attempted to get in touch with the nurse, Mlle. Jusserand, who is remaining there with the child, but it has been impossible for him to gain access to the villa, which has already been twice visited by the Flying Squad.

This case is obviously one of the most mystifying of recent years, and dramatic developments must be expected.

Who killed Mme. Jave? Why? And why was her completely naked body shut into a cupboard at the rear of her husband's consulting-rooms?

While waiting for the repercussions which will inevitably occur, we are in a position to provide a certain amount of information concerning the persons involved in this affair.

Dr. Philippe Jave, born at Poitiers, is forty-four years of age, and after a brilliant career as a student at the École de Médecine de Paris, he was for a time a resident in various hospitals.

Then, until his marriage, he settled at Issy-les-Moulineaux where his surgery was extremely modestly equipped and his patients consisted chiefly of workmen from the nearby factories.

Five years ago he married Eveline Le Guérec, sixteen years younger than himself, so that she was twenty-eight

at the time of her death.

The Le Guérecs are the owners of a canning factory at Concarneau, and 'Le Guérec et Laurent' brand of sardines is well known to housewives.

Immediately after their marriage the young couple moved to the Boulevard Haussmann, into a luxurious flat, and it was not long before Dr. Jave became one of the doctors most in demand in the capital.

Two years later M. Le Guérec, senior, died, leaving the Concarneau business to his son, Yves, and to his daughter.

The Javes have a baby daughter, Michèle, aged three.

To move on to Dr. Négrel, he is also a brilliant young man. Aged thirty, he is unmarried and still occupies his student's lodgings, in the Rue des Saints-Pères, where he lives modestly.

He has no surgery of his own and works with Prof. Lehier. This is the first occasion on which he has agreed to act as a locum-tenens for one of his colleagues during the holidays.

We have tried to ascertain whether the Javes and Dr. Négrel were on friendly terms before this arrangement was made, but the question remains undecided.

Everywhere we have encountered an unusual degree of secrecy, at the Quai des Orfèvres, in the Boulevard Haussmann, and amongst the medical profession.

The concierge has been no more forthcoming and merely affirms that she was not aware of Mme. Jave's presence in the house.

Our Côte d'Azur correspondent has despite this obtained one item of information, slight though it is. At Nice Airport a woman passenger answering to Mme. Jave's description is said to have been seen taking the nine-fifteen plane on Saturday morning, which arrives at Orly at eleven-fifteen. The Airways company refuses to confirm whether or not her name appears on the passenger list.

At the time of going to press, Dr. Paul is engaged on the post-mortem.

When Maigret arrived back home, he carefully cut out the article and slipped it into a rough paper folder, just as he would do at Headquarters when he opened a file.

Only, at the Quai des Orfèvres, his files would contain original, authentic documents, whereas here he had to be content with more or less fictitious articles from the papers.

“Are you ready, Madame Maigret?”

She emerged from the bedroom, in a light cotton dress, a little white hat on her head, and in white gloves, and as they made their way along the pavement, arm in arm, they really did look like a married couple on holiday.

“You seem to be starting to enjoy yourself,” she commented, after a glance out of the corner of her eye.

He made no reply but he was smiling, not thinking of poor Madame Jave, but picturing Janvier wrestling with the case which he must have set his heart on solving all on his own.

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## II

« ^ »

Calvados for everyone?” he asked, drawing his pipe from his pocket, as the waitress in the white apron arrived with the coffee.

He knew the meaning of the look his wife gave him, the look which she then switched, more furtively, towards Pardon. He was not drunk, nor even mellow. He could hardly have had more to drink than the others, but he was conscious none the less of a certain sparkling of his eyes and a slackened manner of speech which were unusual for him.

Twice during dinner Madame Maigret had watched him with a look of tenderness in her eyes, first when he had ordered *friture de goujons*, the second time when he had followed this by asking for an *andouillette grillée* with *pommes frites*.

She had indeed recognized the restaurant in which they had not set foot for twenty years and where, in the old days, they had only been twice. The sign still said *Chez le Père Jules*. The wooden tables had been replaced by ones of some plastic material in violent colours and the bar inside had been modernized. The extraordinary thing was that Père Jules was still there and seemed to have grown no older, so that beneath his shock of white hair he seemed like a dummy figure in a wig.

Though they had come to Joinville in the Pardons’ car it was Maigret who had chosen the restaurant, facing the Island of Love, around which boats and canoes were gliding.

There was a dance close by, and refrains from it were mingling with the music from the loud-speaker in the restaurant. The customers were not numerous and the majority had shed their coats, many were just neighbours who had called in.

Now wasn’t Maigret being faithful to the programme he had mapped out for his holidays?

“There are some things people are always talking about, even humming songs about, and yet never do,” he had declared at the beginning of the meal. “Things such as eating a *friture* in a bistro on the banks of the Marne. Tell me, Pardon, how many times have you come and eaten a *friture* on the bank of the Marne?”

The doctor had searched his memory. It had amused his wife, who had answered :

“Once, when my husband hadn’t yet got his practice.”

“You see! And we’ve been twice. Equally one fancies going out at random, arm in arm, through the streets of Paris...”

“But who has the time, alas!” Pardon had sighed.

“Ah well, for once, I’m taking it. What do you think we did this afternoon? We went by bus as far as the Place Saint-Augustin, and, wonder of wonders, the bus was almost empty. There wasn’t a single traffic-jam. We came back on foot up the Boulevard Haussmann...”

“Without stopping?”

“Without stopping.”

Maigret had, to be sure, taken a look at Dr. Jave’s house. In front of the darkly varnished gate there had been a group of curious spectators, and a policeman in uniform looking crossly at them. It was the first time in such a situation that Maigret had found himself on the side of the idle gazers and he had enjoyed it. The house stood between a shop selling Oriental carpets and the window of a modiste’s which was probably very expensive since there was only a single hat displayed.

It was just the sort of well-to-do, upper-class, slightly old-fashioned building he had imagined.

After that they had continued, still on foot, as far as the Place des Ternes, where they had had a drink outside a café before returning along the Avenue de Wagram and the Champs-Élysées, just like provincial visitors passing through Paris.

“That’ll be splendid!” Maigret had concluded after ordering his unusual meal from the menu.

He had received his wife’s first sympathetic glance because it was exactly the meal he used to order in the old days. Everything seemed to delight him, the music, the couples they could see going in to the dance, the canoeists on the Marne, the night gradually enveloping them. One could feel he would have liked to shed his coat like the others but he did not dare, perhaps because of Pardon.

Madame Maigret was looking at the latter as if to say :

“You see how much better he is!”

It was true that he was relaxed, almost rejuvenated. What the others didn’t know was that he had been in worse sorts, during the spring, than he had been willing to acknowledge or admit to himself. From time to time he had felt worn out, exhausted over nothing, and he had wondered if he wouldn’t finish up like Bodard.

This was one of his colleagues, from the Records Office, a decent chap, conscientious to a fault, who had suddenly found himself the victim of a series of undeserved attacks.

Maigret had done his best to defend him, but there were hints of some pretty nasty political considerations at the back of this business, people in high places who were after Bodard’s skin in order to keep themselves in the clear.

They had succeeded. Bodard had fought back for nearly six months, for his honour more than for his position, and then one morning, as he was climbing the main staircase at the Quai des Orfèvres, he had sunk down dead.

It was quite possibly because of Bodard that Maigret had decided to take these holidays and to treat himself to the little pleasures which he never had enjoyed.

Like this dinner on the bank of the Marne. When he had gone to join the Pardons, in the Rue Picpus, the doctor had simply told him:

“Jave has returned home.”

“And Négrel?” Maigret had asked.

“I don’t know.”

It was odd to be learning the news through a man like Pardon, who was not in the game. They had said nothing more about it during the meal. Now that calvados was being served to the men and liqueurs to the two wives, the latter, as a matter of course, just as after their dinners in the Rue Picpus, drew up their chairs and began to gossip in low voices.

The air was mild and moist, with a slight mist rising from the river.

A couple in a canoe were letting themselves drift with the current while they played sentimental songs on a gramophone.

“I had Deberlin on the telephone earlier on,” Pardon was saying. “It turns out he’s known Philippe Jave well, was a hospital resident with him, and has seen a lot of him right up to quite recently.”

“What does he say about it?”

“Apparently Jave comes from a very ordinary sort of family in Poitiers. His father was a bank clerk and his mother a schoolmistress. The father died when he was a child and it was his mother who brought him up. It was only thanks to scholarships that he was able to finish his training, and his student life can’t have been easy.

“According to Deberlin, Jave’s a plodder, intelligent, reserved, possessing a will of iron. He was expected to specialize in cardiology, which he was passionately interested in, perhaps because he saw his father die of angina pectoris.

“Instead of that, he started in a pretty slummy practice, at Issy-les-Moulineaux, and led the back-breaking life the majority of doctors in the suburbs lead, working fourteen or fifteen hours a day.

“He was thirty-eight or thirty-nine when he took a holiday at Beuzec, near Concarneau, and there he met Eveline.”

“The Le Guérec girl?”



“Yes. They apparently fell in love and he married her. Deberlin has several times visited them at their place in the Boulevard Haussmann where he moved almost immediately after the marriage. Deberlin got the impression they were a happy couple.

“Eveline is quite pretty, but no one would turn round to look at her in the street. She had a joyless childhood in the house of her father, who was a widower. She was shy, unforthcoming, with what Deberlin calls a pathetic smile.

“Deberlin is positive she had something wrong with her health but he doesn’t know what, since Jave’s a discreet sort of chap.

“That’s about all I’ve learnt, except that the Javes seem to have been delighted to have a baby girl.

“They used to go out fairly often, entertained about once a week. Deberlin is more or less the only one of Philippe’s old friends to have continued seeing them.”

“How did you learn that he had gone back home?”

“Quite simply, from the radio.”

Maigret, who had a radio too, never thought of listening to it.

“On the seven o’clock news they announced that the enquiry into the case was proceeding and that Dr. Jave, very downcast, had returned to the Boulevard Haussmann.”

There they were, on the terrace of a suburban bistro, gazing at the lights reflected in the Marne and sipping their glasses of old calvados. What was Janvier doing at this same time? Was he in his office in the Quai des Orfèvres, gathering in statements of evidence and waiting for news from his colleagues out on duty in Paris or elsewhere? For lack of time to have dinner, had he followed the tradition and had sandwiches and glasses of beer sent up from the Brasserie Dauphine?

Pardon must have noticed a nostalgic look pass over his face, for he asked:

“Not too tempted?”

Maigret looked him in the eyes, frankly, considered for a moment, and said:

“No.”

It was true. The Boulevard Haussmann case was showing signs of being one of the most thorny and consuming cases he had known. The social background, for a start, made it more tricky than any other. It is always difficult to set about investigating people in a certain class of society, for the slightest gaffe may have unpleasant consequences. Now in this case doctors were involved. Some professions cherish their *esprit de corps* more than others, officers, for instance, or schoolmasters, colonials, or again, odd though it may seem, Post Office employees.

Janvier, who was conducting an official investigation, was bound to have more trouble finding out about Jave and Négrel than Maigret himself, who could take advantage of his friendship with Pardon.

On top of that, poor Janvier had been landed with Judge Comélieu, who was far and away the most tiresome examining magistrate to deal with. Comélieu was terrified of the Press. Every article which appeared on a case that was in his hands would make him shake all over or put him into a blue fit of rage.

“Above all, not a word to the reporters!” he would invariably insist. By way of reaction, to avoid criticism from the newspapers which are inclined to grow impatient, he himself was inclined to put the first available suspect into custody as being guilty, and not to release him.

Fifty or a hundred times in his career Maigret had held out against him, sometimes at the risk of his own position.

“What are you waiting to arrest him for?” the little magistrate with the waxed moustaches would bark.

“For him to put the rope round his own neck.”

“Or for him to slip across the frontier, couldn’t it be? And then the gutter-press will make hay of you...”

Janvier did not possess Maigret's patience, his obstinate or absent-minded air when Comélieau was working himself up into a rage. It was on account of Comélieau, the chief-inspector was convinced, that the inspector had rubbed the newspapers up the wrong way, from the start of the case, by refusing them the most elementary pieces of information.

"Nothing about Gilbert Négrel?"

"Nothing more than I've already told you. He's a lone wolf. Apart from his work for Professor Lebier, he's not seen about much, and I haven't the faintest notion about his private life. He can't have much money, since he hasn't yet contemplated setting up in practice. That's assuming he's not preparing for a fellowship and intending to become a professor."

It would have been simple to telephone to Dr. Paul, the police surgeon, who was a friend, so as to find out the results of the postmortem. What had caused Eveline Jave's death? There was no mention in the papers of a revolver, a knife, or of strangulation.

If she had perished by some misadventure, there was no reason to fold her body literally in two and push it into a cupboard.

"Tell me, Pardon, how long after death can one bend a body?"

"It depends on the state of rigidity of the corpse. That in turn depends on a variety of factors, including the surrounding temperature. One hour in certain cases. Several hours in others."

That took him no further forward. Anyhow, he didn't want to get absorbed in the affair. He had decided that he would follow it as newspaper readers throughout France were bound to do, at the same times as they, but nothing more.

He was just a member of the public, not a policeman. The only thing to bother him was the responsibility bearing on Janvier, who, for the first time, had the whole weight of Police Headquarters on his shoulders, in holiday time too, when at least half the staff were not at his disposal.

“What he’d have to find out, before anything else, is whether Jave was at Cannes at the time of his wife’s death.”

That was easy to verify and Janvier was bound to have thought of it. Only Maigret himself knew nothing of the results of the enquiry.

He only got the answer the next morning when, at eight o’clock sharp, he went down to buy the newspapers. The Pardons had dropped them at their door about midnight. While she was undressing, a little later, Madame Maigret had murmured:

“You promise not to go to the office?”

“On my oath.”

“You see how much better you are already! After three days’ rest, you’re a new man. If you have to lose all the benefit of your holidays, just because of a dead woman...”

“I shan’t.”

She was reassured to see him open the sideboard and take out the bottle of calvados.

“Just a last drop...” he muttered.

He was not drinking because he was on edge or disheartened, nor to restore himself, but on the contrary, that evening, because he felt relaxed. It was the day’s last little enjoyment.

In the morning, however, he did not wait by the window for his wife to make the bed, before going down to fetch the papers. It was not going back on his word. He was not involving himself in the case. He was following it, like other readers, which wasn’t the same thing at all.

The headlines were even heavier than on the previous day and the most striking read:

## DILEMMA OF TWO DOCTORS

A rival issue printed more cautiously:

## MYSTERY OF FOUR KEYS

Admittedly it came to more or less the same thing in the end. The police, it seemed, had somewhat broken their silence, since items of information were provided which could only have originated from the Quai des Orfèvres or from the examining magistrate's office.

First came a summary, a very sketchy one, of the police doctor's report.

The post-mortem carried out by Dr. Paul has revealed that the contusion, which we already mentioned yesterday, on the victim's right temple, was the result of a blow received not long before death, but that this blow was not sufficiently violent itself to have killed her. It was not struck by means of any heavy instrument. It could have been occasioned simply by a fall onto the floor or by a blow of the fist.

Far more puzzling is the mark of a needle prick on Eveline Jave's left thigh, since there is no doubt that this was caused by a hypodermic syringe.

What substance was injected? This will not be known until after the examination of the internal organs and body tissues by experts.

The victim was not a drug-addict and did not administer injections to herself since, in that case, marks of earlier injections would have been discovered. Besides, her husband is positive on this point...

Maigret had taken a seat outside the same café as the day before, in the Place de la République, and the sky was the same unbroken blue, the air soft and warm.

Because of the wine and the glasses of calvados the night before, he had ordered a coffee and he was puffing slowly at his pipe while he read the three columns of fairly sensational information.

The really dramatic news was Jave's absence from Cannes the previous Saturday and his return to that town, by the Blue Train, on Sunday morning.

A full report of the doctor's interrogation was not given. To Maigret, who was at home in these things and knew how the

papers interpret pieces of information, it was clear that there had been a leakage.

At the start, Jave appeared to have told a story of going for a drive in his car to Monte Carlo, on Saturday afternoon, and to have spent all night at the casino in the same town.

Unfortunately for him some of the staff at Nice airport had noticed his car parked there from noon on Saturday to 10 a.m. on Sunday.

Janvier had done a good job of work, after all. Maigret could imagine the number of telephone calls necessary to reconstruct the chain of events.

At nine-fifteen on Saturday morning Eveline Jave arrived at the airport by taxi and took the plane for Paris.

Scarcely an hour later her husband reached the same airport, in his own car, and enquired about plane departures. There wasn't one before midday.

As luck would have it, a British Airways Viscount, which had been delayed by engine trouble, was ready to take off for London. He had caught it, and at London had immediately found a plane for Paris, where he had arrived at two o'clock in the afternoon.

The concierge at the Boulevard Haussmann, however, was quite positive. She hadn't seen him, no more than she had seen his wife.

This concierge was a certain Madame Dubois, whom the reporter described as still young and good-looking, with a ten-year-old son. Her husband had deserted her a few days after the birth of the child and she had never had any news of him since.

She had, it was added, spent two hours at Police Headquarters and on emerging had refused to make any statement.

Her photograph was published, but it was difficult to gain an idea of her face since she was hiding it with her right forearm.

Maigret knew the houses in the Boulevard Haussmann, which were built all at the same period and are roughly identical in type. The concierges' lodges in them are spacious, with a kind of hall in front, and double glass doors to allow arrivals and departures to be observed.

Madame Dubois had seen the maid, Josépha, arrive at eight o'clock in the morning. She had seen Dr. Négrel go past at nine. She had seen him go down again at ten past twelve, return upstairs at two o'clock and leave for good at half-past five.

Strange to say, she had noticed neither Dr. Jave nor his wife.

Yet the latter must certainly have entered the house, since she had been found dead in it.

According to the newspaper report still, Jave, when challenged, had refused to give an account of his time at Paris during Saturday afternoon and had withdrawn into the shelter of professional secrecy.

They had let him go. They had let Dr. Négrel go too, according to the stop-press news; and that must have caused Judge Comélieau a terrific mental struggle.

On arrival at Orly Airport, at eleven-fifteen a.m., Madame Jave had travelled in the Air France bus, which had deposited her at the Boulevard des Capucines. The driver remembered her because she was wearing a white tailored suit, very much of the Côte d'Azur, which had caught his eye.

The white suit had disappeared, as well as the matching shoes and the underwear.

From her leaving the Boulevard des Capucines no further trace of the young woman could be found till the moment when the locksmith had opened the door of the cupboard, at nine o'clock on Monday morning, in the presence of Josépha and Négrel.

The matter of the keys did not simplify the problem. Again according to the daily papers, there existed four keys, which could open both the door of the residential flat and that of the doctor's professional rooms. One of these keys was in

Josépha's charge, another in the charge of Dr. Négrel for so long as he was locum-tenens. Jave had the third, and then the fourth had been left with the concierge.

Eveline Jave herself had no key to the flat in the Boulevard Haussmann.

That meant that someone must have opened the door for her. Unless of course the concierge had lied and had handed her own key over to her.

If only Dr. Paul had been able to be more precise about the hour of death! His report said: "*On Saturday between the hours of four in the afternoon and ten at night.*"

At four o'clock, Négrel was still at the Boulevard Haussmann, and so was Josépha. Négrel had left at half-past five, and Josépha about six o'clock, since she had nothing to do and was expected to dinner at her daughter's.

Jave, on the other hand, had been in Paris since two in the afternoon, but had caught the Blue Train at seven fifty-five at the Gare de Lyon.

The newspaper printed a photograph of Josépha, snapped just as she was leaving her daughter's, in the Rue Washington. It showed a tall dry woman, with rather masculine features. The reporter hinted that the conduct of the daughter Antoinette, aged twenty-nine, was not beyond reproach.

None the less the mother and daughter were supposed to have remained on the best of terms. Josépha had her own room at the Boulevard Haussmann, on the fifth floor, with the other servants in the building, but as often as possible she would go and stay the night at her daughter's where there was a spare bed for her. That was what had happened on Saturday night, and again on Sunday.

When the photographer had snapped her, she had not hidden her face, like the concierge, but had stared at the camera with a look of defiance.

The nurse, at Cannes, was still living enclosed in the Villa Marie-Thérèse with the child, and the local reporters had rung in vain at the gate.



Latest news, at the foot of the third column: Yves Le Guérec, Eveline Jave's brother, who ran the factory at Concarneau, had arrived in Paris and had taken up residence at the Hotel Scribe.

Maigret finished his coffee, wondered whether to have something more, folded up his newspapers and began to walk around the Place.

Generally speaking, a criminal case recalls one or more others, since the reasons for killing, like the means of accomplishing it, are not all that numerous.

Yet he searched his memory in vain for a similar instance. He had known four or five criminal doctors. One of them, at Toulouse, fifteen or so years before, had killed one of his patients by administering to her a deliberately mortal dose of a toxic drug. It was not until three years later that it was discovered, by chance, that he owed large sums of money to this patient and had found this the only means of ridding himself of his debt.

Another, about the same time, in the Massif Central, had used a hypodermic syringe, injecting a substance different from that which he had prescribed. He had later claimed that it was an unintentional error and he had been given the benefit of the doubt, since it was not impossible that after a day of harassing visits he should have mistaken the ampoule, all the more so considering the semi-darkness pervading the sick room.

So far, Eveline Jave seemed to have been killed in the same way.

The difference from the earlier cases was that in hers there was not one doctor involved, but two.

Had her husband any advantage to be gained by doing away with her? She was rich. It was thanks to his marriage that he had been able to abandon the suburbs in which he used to lead so hard and joyless an existence to become a society doctor in the capital.

Was he conducting an affair? Was he contemplating starting a new establishment and family? Or was his wife threatening him with divorce after discovering some infidelity on his part?

Anything was possible.

Even a drama of jealousy. No one knew in what circumstances Eveline had left Cannes on Saturday morning. What had she told her husband? Had they agreed on her making this journey? And even if so, might not Jave have suspected that there was some other object in mind than the avowed object?

One fact was certain, that he had followed her by the speediest means possible and that he was in Paris not long after her.

Was Eveline Jave young Négrel's mistress? Had she been so for long? Was it she who had suggested to her husband that he should take him on as his locum for the holidays?

Négrel too could have had motives for getting rid of her. For example, supposing he had other ideas for marriage and she, on her side, was determined to desert her husband in order to marry him.

Or again...

Maigret had not begun to walk back towards the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir but was following the Grands Boulevards, which he had seldom seen so empty.

Near the Porte Saint-Denis, he went into a bar, sat down inside, and ordered a beer and something to write with.

Since he was now forming part of the public at large, he was going to play the game right through to the end and he had an ironical smile on his lips as he wrote out, in printed characters:

BUT WHY THE DEVIL WAS SHE NAKED?

On the envelope he put Janvier's name and addressed it to the Quai des Orfèvres. He didn't sign it, of course. People who give advice to the police seldom sign their messages. He could picture Moers' expression, in the laboratory, if they asked him

to check on the fingerprints, since he possessed those of the chief-inspector.

But in this case it was too tame a letter for Janvier to order that. More likely he would shrug his shoulders.

None the less this was probably the hub of the question. Either the young woman had undressed herself or she had been stripped after her death.

Since the body bore no wound, the clothes were not blood-stained, and, as a result, Maigret could see no valid reason for unclothing her.

On the other hand, what reason would she herself have had to put herself entirely in the nude between four in the afternoon and ten o'clock at night? To change her clothes? She would have done so in the flat which was the other side of the landing, where she had her bedroom and her belongings.

It wasn't to take a bath either. One of the papers printed a detailed plan of the quarters.

The flat on the right comprised a hall, a large drawing-room, a smaller sitting-room they called a boudoir, three bedrooms, a dining-room, a kitchen and a bathroom.

The one on the left, reserved for Jave's professional activities, was conceived on more or less the same plan, but the rooms in it had been allotted to different purposes.

It was probably one of the most luxurious doctor's surgeries in Paris. The drawing-room became the waiting-room, furnished, according to the paper, in pure Empire style. The boudoir, also Empire, was Jave's office, the one in which he questioned his patients before going through into another room to examine them.

Beyond this consulting-room, corresponding to one of the front bedrooms, came another set apart for radiological examinations and certain types of minor operation.

Lastly, the laboratory, surrounded by cupboards from floor to ceiling. The bathroom, deconsecrated, served to store the household's trunks and suit-cases, and in the kitchen were

housed the cleaning tools and anything else which had no place of its own.

There remained one room, with a bed and the usual bedroom furniture, which was used, it appeared, when the Javes put up a friend for the night, and where the doctor, whenever he was overtaxed, would from time to time take a short siesta.

There was no report that the bed had been found unmade. If Eveline had been killed in the flat opposite, why should they have run the risk of crossing the landing with the body when there were cupboards over there too in which to conceal it? Why remove her clothes?

Had the murderer intended, for example, to come back for the corpse in order to throw it in the Seine or in some wood on the outskirts of Paris?

That introduced a fresh question. Jave had come from Cannes without his car, which he had left at Nice Airport. Did Négrel own a motor? The newspapers were silent on this point.

If the murderer had intended to do away with the body, there was more than a chance that he had a vehicle at his disposal...

Maigret had begun walking again and he now stopped automatically in front of some familiar glass frames, for he was at the cinema opposite his home, where he most often went with his wife.

Outside a jeweller's, he caught sight of himself in a mirror, brows frowning, almost fierce-looking with the effort of his thinking, and he laughed at himself.

The whole thing, after all, meant nothing. He was building in the void. He recognized, all of a sudden, the mentality of the public who know nothing of criminal cases except through the newspaper reports.

The business about the car was misleading. Hadn't he, three times at least in his career, known murderers—one of them a woman—remove their victim by taxi to a left-luggage office

in a railway station? It required only a large enough trunk, or a wicker basket such as are used everywhere by tradesmen.

In the present case, had the intention been to disfigure the dead woman before this final journey so as to render her unrecognizable and avoid her identification?

If it were Négrel, why hadn't he returned during Sunday to complete this task, while the coast was clear, since Josépha was at her daughter's?

To that too there was an answer: on Sunday he had no reason to go to the Boulevard Haussmann and the concierge wouldn't fail to notice him passing through the entrance arch, especially if he next emerged with a heavy trunk.

"You look cheerful," his wife remarked when she opened the door of the flat to him.

It was because he was enjoying himself. He was busy playing at private detectives, he who had used to scorn them. Over there, at Headquarters, they would work on precise data, and when an hypothesis was put forward, they had the means of checking it.

Madame Maigret was almost ready. She needed only her hat and her gloves, for he had decided to take her out to lunch at an Italian restaurant in the Boulevard de Clichy.

So far as that was concerned, he was not just improvising, strange though it may seem. Not that he had a definite plan for employing his days, and he was allowing his fancy to roam to a certain extent; yet nevertheless he was following a basic idea.

As he had admitted, the night before, to his friend Pardon, he was satisfying little desires which his daily work never allowed him to fulfil.

Thus he had returned to Père Jules', where he had eaten *friture de goujons* and *andouillette grillée*. It wasn't perhaps quite as good as twenty years before, but he had been content.

He was satisfied too, in the mornings, to follow, from his window, the comings and goings in the Boulevard Richard-

Lenoir, and the lorries entering Catoire & Potut's and the others emerging.

The Italian restaurant in the Boulevard de Clichy, where he was escorting his wife, was unknown to him. He had never set foot in it, but passing by, several times, and glancing into the half-darkened interior, he had thought to himself that it would be pleasant to eat a spaghetti there.

There was something else that he would do, but he wouldn't mention it to his wife, for fear she would laugh at him. Perhaps he would be forced to choose some out-of-the-way place, the Place des Vosges, for instance, or the Parc Montsouris?

He wanted to sit down on a bench and stay there a long time, peacefully, not thinking about anything, smoking his pipe and watching children playing.

"Are you ready?" asked Madame Maigret, pulling on her white cotton gloves.

She was wearing scent, as on Sundays and cinema evenings, and had put on a flowered dress.

"Just a second."

It only remained for him to cut out the articles from the morning papers and slip them into the yellow folder.

After lunch, they would climb slowly up to the Sacré-Coeur, like tourists, and all along the Rue Lepic Madame Maigret would stop every now and then to get her breath back.

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### III

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They had chosen a parasol striped white and blue. For three cafés laid claim to the Place du Tertre, and with each one thrusting its terrace as far forward as possible, the parasols became like flags: the oranges, the dark blues, and the white and blue stripes. The iron chairs were all the same, the tables too, and probably the vin ordinaire they served in jugs. It was like a never-ending holiday, with coaches debouching from an

alley-way where they seemed to push the walls apart, tourists armed with cameras, painters—especially women—in front of their easels. There was even a fire-eater who, by way of an extra, swallowed swords.

Here too, Maigret and his wife from time to time would exchange a glance. They never talked much when they were together on their own. And in the looks they were exchanging today, for example, there were both nostalgia and mutual understanding.

It was no longer the Place du Tertre they had known when Maigret was starting at the desk in a police-station, certainly, but it was amusing all the same, it was now a coloured fairground, noisy, more aggressive in its vulgarity. Hadn't they changed, themselves, too? Why insist that the rest of the world stay fixed when we grow older?

That, or roughly that, was what they were saying to each other by batting their eyelids, and they were also saying thank you to each other.

The wine was young, slightly acid. The folding chair creaked under the weight of the chief-inspector, who liked to tip his seat backwards. At the next table to them, a loving couple, who can't have made up forty years of age between them, were holding hands and silently watching the tourists passing to and fro. The boy's hair was too long; the girl's too short. The houses had been newly painted like a set for a musical comedy. The guide from one of the coaches, his megaphone to his lips, was explaining something in English, then in German.

Just at that moment a news-vendor interrupted, he too yelling confused words of which one could only make out:

“... *sensational revelations*...”

Maigret reached out an arm, clicked his fingers like a schoolboy. He bought the two rival afternoon papers, and the lovers, next door, contented themselves with buying one of them.

He kept for himself the one little Lassagne worked on, passed the other to his wife.

On the front page appeared a large photograph of a girl in a bathing-costume leaning against a boat. The girl had thin legs and thighs, two small pointed breasts, not quite formed. She was smiling at the camera with a shy, awkward smile.

What gave the impression that she was a victim marked down by fate? The print was blurred. The newspaper had enlarged a snapshot taken on a beach in a poor light.

*“Eveline Jave,”* the caption read, *“photographed by her brother the year she met Dr. Jave.”*

A young provincial lady, correct and sad-looking, who must have lived in a strict home and hankered after another existence.

It was Yves Le Guérec, it was explained lower down, who had allowed little Lassagne to have the picture.

#### DR. NÉGREL’S STORY

So one of the two men had agreed to see, if not the journalists as Buch, at any rate one of their number.

Lassagne, thin and red-headed, lively as a monkey, must have passed a few nerve-racking hours, and Maigret could picture him returning to his newspaper’s building and dashing to his desk to edit his article, which the officeboys would take section by section to the compositors.

If it was not sensational, as the news-vendor was maintaining, if indeed there were not strictly speaking any revelations, the text was none the less interesting for that. Lassagne, as usual, first set the scene.

It was in his rooms in the Rue des Saints-Pères, in an old house a few yards from Saint-Germain-des-Prés, that Dr. Négrel was kind enough to grant us an exclusive interview.

The building, which has formerly been a large private house, has preserved on its pediments the coat-of-arms of a famous French family, but for a long time past the



premises, fallen into disrepair, have been occupied by several families.

The courtyard is crowded with motor-scooters, bicycles and prams. A carpenter has his shop on the ground floor, and the steps of the staircase, with its handsome wrought-iron banisters, are worn away.

We went up them to the third floor, with its attic windows, formerly servants' rooms, and at the end of a dark corridor we knocked at a door on which a plain visiting-card was fixed by a drawing pin.

We had made an appointment. When the door was opened, we discovered a young man with dark hair and a clear complexion, who could pass for the leading young actor in a film.

Dr. Négrel, as we were to learn from him a little later, comes from the South of France, from Nîmes, where his family has resided for several generations. The family has had its ups and downs. One Négrel was a naval surgeon under Napoleon. Another was a public attorney under Louis-Philippe.

Dr. Négrel's father, who is still alive, is a photographer, and the doctor was a student at Montpellier University.

The doctor...

Maigret interrupted his reading to eavesdrop. The two lovers, at the adjacent table, were reading the same paper, more or less at the same pace as himself, and the girl was murmuring: "What did I tell you?"

"What?"

"It's a love story."

"Let me read the rest."

Maigret smiled vaguely and he too continued reading.

The doctor, despite his prepossessing physical appearance, seemed to us just a straightforward, serious man, obviously deeply disturbed by the events of the last few days.

His rooms have remained those of a student rather than a doctor for whom one can predict a brilliant career. He

received us in a room which serves jointly as a study, drawing-room and dining-room. Through open doors we caught glimpses of a simply furnished bedroom and a minute kitchen.

“I don’t understand anything of what’s happened,” Négrel first declared as he sat down on the windowsill, after offering me an old red plush armchair. “The police, and then the examining magistrate, have interrogated me at length, asking me questions which I was quite incapable of answering. Apparently they suspect me of having killed Madame Jave. But why, why should I have done it?”

Thick eyebrows, meeting together, give greater depth to his expression. On the table were lying the remains of a cold meal which the concierge must have gone to buy him somewhere round the corner. He was unshaven, wearing neither tie nor coat.

We asked him:

“May I, in my turn, on behalf of our readers, put a certain number of questions to you?”

“I’ll do my best to answer them.”

“Even if these questions are indiscreet.”

He made a vague gesture, as of a man who has already been asked the most indiscreet questions.

“First of all, how long have you known the Javes?”

“I’ve known Dr. Jave for three years. They asked me that ‘down there’, too.”

“Where did you meet him?”

“While serving under my principal, Professor Lebier, whose assistant I am. Jave sometimes brings us patients for a specialist’s opinion, and one day when I was in a hurry to get to the centre of town, he gave me a lift in his car.”

“You made friends with each other?”

“He said to me that some day or other I must go and dine with him.”

“You went?”

“Six months later, just by chance. At the end of a consultation with Professor Lebier, he asked me if I was free that same evening as he had some interesting people

coming to dinner, and so I went to the Boulevard Haussmann.”

“That was the occasion you first met Madame Jave?”

“Yes.”

“What impression did she make on you?”

“I was the least important of the guests and therefore found myself at the foot of the table. I scarcely had an opportunity to have any conversation with her.”

“Did she seem like a happy woman?”

“Neither happy, nor unhappy. She was just behaving as the mistress of the house.”

“Did you often return, as a guest, to the Boulevard Haussmann?”

“Fairly often.”

“According to your colleagues, you don’t go out much, and seldom dine in town.”

At this point in our talk, Négrel appeared slightly embarrassed. Then he ended by smiling.

“The Javes,” he explained, “used to entertain a lot, once a week at least, and they always had about fifteen people.

“Sometimes there would be one woman too many, or a girl, and I would be asked by telephone at the last minute to act as a kind of stopgap.”

“Why did you accept?”

“Because they were nice people.”

“Both of them?”

“Yes, both.”

“What do you think of Jave?”

“He’s an excellent practitioner.”

“As a man?”

“I’ve always looked on him as a decent man, and indeed a scrupulous one.”

“Yet you surely don’t like society doctors?”

“He wasn’t only a society doctor.”

“You gradually became a friend of the family?”

“Friend’s a big word. Despite the difference in age between Philippe and me, we got along very well together.”

“Do you say ‘*tu*’ to him?”

“I say ‘*tu*’ to very few people. Perhaps that’s due to the Protestant atmosphere at Nîmes, where I was born and spent my childhood.”

“You don’t use ‘*tu*’ to Eveline Jave either?”

“No.”

A rather curt No.

“How were your relations with her?”

“Correct. I’d go so far as to say friendly.”

“She took you into her confidence?”

“She merely told me something I already knew from her husband, that she never enjoyed the life other women had.”

“For what reason?”

“Because of her health.”

“She was an invalid?”

“I don’t think I’m betraying any secrets, since I wasn’t her doctor, in saying that she suffered from Stoker-Adams’ disease. That’s what’s more commonly called a chronic slow pulse. Her heart since childhood beat not at a pulse-rate of seventy, as is more or less normal, but at forty or forty-five.”

“What are the effects of this disease?”

“To all appearances the patient lives the same existence as other people. Only he runs the risk at any moment of fainting, or being seized with convulsions, even to the extent of sudden death.”

“She was aware of this?”

“From the age of twelve. After an examination by a top-ranking specialist, she had listened at the door and heard everything.”

“Was she scared of it?”

“No. Resigned.”

“She was gay all the same.”

“A slightly stuffy gaiety, if I may put it like that. You’d have said she was always afraid of bringing on the attack by too much exuberance.”

“She wasn’t afraid to have a child?”

“No. On the contrary, she was glad to be able to leave something behind her, even if it was to cost her her life.”

“Was she in love with her husband?”

“I imagine so, since she married him.”

“He was in love with her?”

“I always saw him very attentive to her.”

“Did you ever have occasion to meet her on her own. I mean, in her husband’s absence?”

A pause. A creasing of the young doctor’s forehead.

“Yes and no. I have never been to see her personally. Sometimes, though, when I was at the Boulevard Haussmann, Jave was summoned urgently to a patient.”

“And on those occasions she has never attempted to confide in you?”

“No. Not what you’d call confide.”

“To talk to you about her life?”

“So far as each of us talks about our past, our childhood.”

“So you became good friends?”

“If that’s what you mean.”

“She’s never been here, to these rooms?”

A fresh pause.

“Why do you ask me that?”

“I’ll give you a frank answer. Your concierge, to whom I showed Eveline Jave’s photograph, claims to have seen her go up to your flat at least twice, the second time six weeks ago.”

“The concierge is lying, or else she’s mistaken somebody else for her.”

At the neighbouring table the girl was saying:

“Which one do you believe? The concierge or the doctor?”

They were reading to the same rhythm. Her lover replied:

“All concierges are bitches, but the doctor seems to be a bit put out.”

“I told you it was a love story...”

Madame Maigret, who had already finished the doubtless shorter article in the other paper, was holding it on her lap and gazing dreamily at the tourists passing to and fro.

Maigret was forgetting the role he played at Police Headquarters, the job that he had done all his life, and caught

himself reading the paper just like any man in the street. There and then, he was making a little discovery which enchanted him.

Moralists, as a rule, those who make it their business to teach their fellows lessons, maintain that it is an unhealthy taste, even indeed a perverse instinct, that impels readers to seize on reports of crimes and catastrophes.

Not having thought much about it, the chief-inspector, even up to the day before, would have been tempted to share their view.

He was realizing, suddenly, that it wasn't as plain as all that, and the remarks of the young girl near by had done something to help him revise his opinion.

Surely readers seize with equal feverishness on reports of heroic or outstanding achievements? Was there ever seen a crowd so packed and enthusiastic along the Grands Boulevards, and in the middle of the night at that, as there was on the arrival of Lindbergh?

What people are looking for is surely to find out just how far a man can go, in good as well as in evil?

Wasn't the curiosity of the girl next door due to the fact that, herself a beginner in love, she wanted to discover the limits of love?

She was hoping that the newspaper, and the progress of the case of the dead woman in the Boulevard Haussmann, would enlighten her about them.

Lassagne continued, making the most of his scoop.

Next we asked him : "Do you have many women visitors, Monsieur Négrel?"

"I used to have them occasionally, some time ago."

"What do you mean by some time ago?"

During the whole of our conversation he never stopped smoking cigarettes, which he would afterwards stub out on the ledge of the open window.

"For the past year, I have been engaged. The police know about it. They must have already interrogated the

girl and that's why it's pointless for me to make a mystery of it."

"May we know her name?"

"They'll doubtless tell you at the Quai des Orfèvres. It's not my part to do so."

"It's a girl living with her parents?"

"Yes."

"Does she work?"

"Yes."

"She's from a bourgeois family?"

"Her father's a well-known lawyer."

"And she's been coming to see you at home?"

Pause.

"I'm going to show myself even more indiscreet and I ask you to excuse me. Have you ever, doctor, at any time, been the lover of Madame Jave?"

"I've already had that question put to me."

"What did you answer?"

"No."

"You haven't ever been in love with her either?"

"Never."

"She wasn't in love with you?"

"She neither did nor said anything to make me think so."

"You didn't see her, last Saturday?"

"No."

"You didn't see Jave?"

"Neither her nor him. I attended five patients during the afternoon, and their card-records have been duly discovered in the office. I left at half-past five, after saying au revoir to Josépha and telling her to shut the windows."

"Whose idea was it that you should be the locum this summer?"

"Dr. Jave's."

"How did he manage in other years?"

"He used to employ one of my colleagues. Dr. Brisson, who started a practice at Amiens last winter, and consequently is no longer available."

“One last question. Do you consider Josépha to be particularly devoted to her employers?”

“I’ve never bothered about it.”

“You’ve just spent several weeks in her company. You were in frequent touch with her. Is she the sort of woman to commit perjury in the interests of either her master or her mistress?”

“I repeat I know nothing about it.”

Lassagne concluded:

We thus left a man whose honour, future and even life are at stake. He realizes it. Whether guilty or innocent, he knows the weight of the words and threats which he has to sustain. He appeared to us a man determined to defend himself, calmly, without heat or anger, and the last look he shot us from the top of the stairs was full of bitterness.

“This is how I think it happened,” the girl at the next table was saying. “They were lovers, she and the young doctor. The concierge has got no reason to tell lies and I’m convinced she really recognized her. Her husband is older than she is. He was treating her like a little girl, and women don’t like that. Négrel, though, is a good-looking boy, with those soft eyes...”

Maigret smiled round his pipe. Where had she got the soft eyes from? Was it because the newspaper had mentioned thick eyebrows?

“I’m sure of it, he’s madly in love. In all his answers, you can feel he’s holding himself in. And look how he’s always stubbing his cigarettes out on the windowsill.”

“That doesn’t mean anything.”

“It means that he was boiling inside while forcing himself to appear calm. She couldn’t get out of going to Cannes with her husband and daughter. I bet it was she who suggested that he should be the locum. That way, with Négrel spending part of his time in the Boulevard Haussmann, there would still be a link between them.”

“You’ve got some imagination!”



Maigret himself was just thinking that this young couple would not be hanging fire for long. The boy was fair-haired and looked serious. The girl's supple body was clinging to him as if to twine around him and he was displaying a certain amount of embarrassment, seemed to be apologizing in the presence of the people surrounding them.

"Don't talk so loud."

"I'm not saying anything wrong. After a month apart, she couldn't restrain herself and caught the aeroplane with the intention of returning to Cannes on the evening plane. She must have told her husband she was going to see some girl-friend on the Côte. And he, suspecting something was up, followed her.

"That afternoon he caught them together in the bedroom at the back of the surgery. He let Négrel go. It was his wife he had it in for. He hit her. She fainted. And then, deciding on the spot to be done with her, he gave her an injection."

"Why did he put her in the cupboard, if it was a crime of passion?"

Madame Maigret, who was listening too, exchanged a glance with her husband. It was odd, in that fairground atmosphere, this light-hearted, almost jolly chatter about a tragedy. The characters, transformed by the girl, were losing their humanity, their tragic reality, were becoming puppets of popular fiction.

And yet, what she was saying was quite possibly the truth. Her theory, at any rate for all that Maigret knew of the case, was as plausible as any other.

"Don't you see? By shutting her up in the cupboard and returning to Cannes, by maintaining afterwards that he had never been to Paris, he was making Négrel out to be the murderer. Now, to prove it, he is the only one they suspect."

"They suspect both of them."

"Who said so?"

"I'll bet that the police released them in order to watch them and wait for one or other of them to make a false move."

That wasn't so stupid either. The public are never as stupid as one thinks, after all.

Poor Janvier had been confronted by a dilemma which doesn't arise all that often for a detective. Usually, one has a suspected criminal in charge and the question is to know whether it's better to charge him or to release him in the hope of obtaining sufficient proof.

With only one possible guilty party, Judge Gomélieu would not have hesitated: he would have been charged.

But with two? They couldn't both have killed Eveline Jave. One of the doctors was therefore innocent. To keep them both at once in custody obviously entailed depriving an innocent man of his freedom.

Even Comélieu had realized that and had reluctantly agreed to release both of them.

Who was keeping watch on the street, near the house where Négrel lived, while Lassagne was conducting his interview? Lapointe? Gianini?

There would be someone, at any rate, just as there was a Headquarters man in the Boulevard Haussmann.

One of the two doctors had consented to meet the Press, choosing the representative of the paper with the largest circulation.

The other was keeping silent, enclosed in his flat. Lassagne actually added:

We have tried in vain to obtain an interview with Dr. Jave. Since he left the Prefecture of Police and returned to the Boulevard Haussmann, the doctor has seen no one except Josépha. He must have removed his telephone receiver, since, whenever his number is called, the "engaged" tone is invariably obtained.

"You having another drink?" Madame Maigret asked, as she saw her husband sign to the waiter.

Yes, he was having another glass of wine. He was thirsty. Most of all, he didn't yet want to leave.

“What do you think of it?” she continued in an undertone.

He merely shrugged his shoulders. To that question he usually replied that he never thought, and it was almost true. Two characters were beginning to outline themselves in his eyes: Eveline Jave and Dr. Négrel. They were no longer just sheer entities. Eveline in particular was coming to life, since he had seen her photograph, and, in Janvier’s shoes, he would have gone straight off to Concarneau.

The key to the drama was not necessarily there. None the less it was in that town that the young woman had spent the greater part of her life and he would have liked to learn more about it.

Had she been educated in a convent? He would have taken an oath on it, from her way of standing and looking at the camera. He could imagine the house empty of women, a grey house probably, which very likely smelt of fish, with a father and brother for whom only business counted.

How had she accustomed herself to Paris life? And when she gave a dinner or a party, wouldn’t she have continued to feel gauche?

Négrel too was a provincial, despite his young film-star appearance. He came from Nîmes, a Protestant. His student days ended, he hadn’t looked for a practice, but had become assistant to his professor.

Lassagne had succeeded in making him admit that he had in the past received visits from several women in his rooms in the Rue des Saints-Pères and Maigret would have been ready to bet they were girls of easy virtue from Saint-Germain-des-Prés. He would even have bet they had only paid brief visits and that none had spent all night in the young doctor’s bed.

Now, for the past year, he had been engaged. Maigret was itching to telephone to Janvier to ask him the name of the young lady. The daughter of a well-known barrister. And she used to come to his place. That meant a scandal in the offing.

The couple of lovers were departing, arm in arm, and, their paper left behind on the café-table, they were making their

way towards the Sacré-Coeur. As she passed, the girl gave a glance of amusement at Madame Maigret's hat, though there was nothing funny about it. Admittedly she herself wore no hat on her hair, which was cut as short as a Roman emperor's.

"What do they say in your paper?"

"Probably the same as in yours."

He unfolded it automatically. There was again a photograph on the front page, not the one of Eveline Jave, but of her brother, Yves Le Guérec, leaning on the bar at the Hôtel Scribe.

He wasn't like his sister. He was a square-built, thick-set fellow, with a bony face under close-cropped hair which was probably red.

Failing to achieve Négrel or Jave, it was he whom little Lassagne's competitor had been to interview.

Yves Le Guérec, the story ran, was married, the father of two children, and had had a villa built for himself two miles out of Concarneau. He had succeeded his father, on the latter's death, at the canning factory.

"From the time of her marriage, my sister never returned to the country. I wondered why myself, probably because her husband preferred to keep her apart from the family."

"You never saw her again?"

"From time to time, when I was in Paris, I used to call and give her my love. Once I brought my wife and children to the Boulevard Haussmann, but we got the impression that we weren't wanted."

"For what reason?"

"We're ordinary folk, we don't move in the same circles as Dr. Jave..."

"Wasn't it with your sister's dowry that he set himself up in practice?"

"At the time of his marriage, he hadn't a sou. Debts, rather. My father paid them off and it was my father too who paid for everything you see at the Boulevard Haussmann."

“You don’t like your brother-in-law?”

“I didn’t say that. Let’s put it this way, that we aren’t on the same side of the fence. Or rather, so he would like it thought, though in fact his mother was never anything but a schoolmistress...”

Here one could sense old rancours mounting to the surface. They were, after all, two worlds. The Le Guérecs, despite their prosperity, continued, in their part of the country, to lead a plain and simple life, whereas Jave, who had come into contact with Parisian life, had evolved.

Yet it was the sardine canners who footed the bill:

“My sister inherited half the shares in the factory and she received a handsome sum each year, I can promise you.”

“She was married under the married couples’ joint property régime?”

“Unfortunately.”

“And you?”

“I too. It isn’t the same thing, as my wife is a ship-owner’s daughter and ship-owners are the same sort as ourselves.”

“You think it was murder?”

“Do you imagine Eveline could have given herself a hypodermic injection and gone and packed herself, bent double, into a cupboard to die, after first having locked the door? Where is that key? Where are her clothes?”

“Who do you think may have killed her?”

Le Guérec opened his mouth to reply, then changed his mind.

“I don’t want to bring a slander action down on myself. The facts speak for themselves, don’t they? As for claiming, as some do, that my sister had a lover, it’s a ghastly lie. She was incapable of it. She hadn’t the temperament. Men used to frighten her. As a girl, at dances, she would stay sitting in a corner all evening and would only consent to dance with me. Look at this photo. I remember she took endless trouble to find a bathing costume that more or less allowed nothing to be seen. She was ridiculous about it.”

“Used she to write to you often?”

“On my birthday, and my wife’s and the children’s, as well as at New Year.”

“She knew she was ill?”

“She’s always known she would never make old bones, but she was resigned to it.”

“Was she religious?”

“At home, she was very religious and went to Mass every morning. In due course I learnt that her husband had changed her life and that she no longer practised.”

“You think she wasn’t happy?”

“I’m sure of it.”

“On what grounds?”

“Just things one senses. Her way of repeating to me, for instance, with a vague smile:

“ ‘Don’t forget to come and see me each time you’re in Paris. And be sure to tell the children that Auntie sends her love...’ ”

All the same, she was naked when her body was found in the cupboard. Had her murderer stripped her after the deed?

Once again, the theory was scarcely very likely, still less so seeing that it’s a difficult task to undress a dead body.

And why undress her?

What was Jave doing, alone with Josépha in the flat in the Boulevard Haussmann? What answers had he made to the questions put by Janvier and the examining magistrate about his hasty journey?

If Comélieau had not placed him under arrest, it must be that some serious doubt persisted, and that almost certainly the chances were more or less even between the two suspects.

Maigret was now wanting to learn more about Philippe Jave and his personal life. Had he a mistress, a second household? Or was he really the smart and at the same time austere doctor that the majority of people considered him?

“What are we doing now?” Madame Maigret asked, as her husband called the waiter to pay for the drinks.

He had no idea. It was of no importance, and that of course was the most marvellous thing about it.

“We’ll start by going down the Saint-Pierre steps...”

Then they would stroll along the Boulevard Rochechouart. They could afterwards go down the Rue des Martyrs, for instance, where he liked the swarming crowds. He liked the Faubourg-Montmartre too.

Having nothing to do he was seeing Paris in a new light and he was determined not to waste a crumb of it.

“Tonight I must ’phone to Pardon.”

“You’re not feeling ill?”

“No. Perhaps he’ll have some new information about this Dr. Jave.”

“Are you bothered about it?”

It wasn’t even bothering him. He was thinking about it a good deal, to be sure, but the case was really just a sort of filigree decoration to his saunterings through Paris.

“Tomorrow morning, maybe I’ll take a stroll down the Rue des Saints-Pères.”

That was more dangerous, for there would hardly be any people in that street and he was running the risk of finding himself face to face with one of his own inspectors.

“I wonder if we shouldn’t go and take a look at the sea at Concarneau.”

He was putting forward these plans without believing in them, just to amuse himself. All this was now Janvier’s task, and Maigret was enjoying a kind of foretaste of his existence in the days of his retirement.

This thought cast a cloud. He was happy to agree, for a few days, for three weeks at most, to play the part of the strollers, to be a member of the dear public.

But when it would be a question of playing that rôle for the rest of his days, what then?

Just as they were walking towards the open space before the Sacré-Coeur, he suddenly squeezed his wife's arm and she understood that he was moved; it even seemed to him that she could guess why, but she said nothing about it.

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## IV

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He had not telephoned to Pardon that evening as he had resolved to do in the Place du Tertre. To tell the truth, he hadn't thought about it again.

It must have been around five o'clock when his wife and he had turned the corner of the Faubourg-Montmartre and the Grands Boulevards. Sunlight was falling full on the pavement, which, because there were fewer passers-by than usual, seemed more spacious.

Between the display-windows of a dress shop and a cutler's, he had spotted the almost dark entrance to a sort of tunnel and caught the shrilling of a tinny bell like those of cinemas in the old days.

It was in fact the entrance to a little cinema, which he didn't remember ever having seen before. Some early Charlie Chaplins were being shown and Maigret stopped, hesitating.

"Shall we go in?" he suggested to his wife.

She had cast a mistrustful look at the dark plush curtain behind the ticket-kiosk, and at the greyish walls of the passage.

"Do you think it's clean?"

In the end they had gone in, and when they emerged, the triumphant August sun had disappeared, replaced, all along the Boulevards, by a double garland of lights and by the neon signs. They hadn't realized that it was the day of the change of programme and that they had, in fact, sat through two showings.

It was too late to return home for dinner.

"We'll go and eat something round here."

Madame Maigret had remarked:

"If we continue like this, I'll be forgetting how to cook."

They had been to the Place des Victoires, to a restaurant where he liked the quiet terrace outside. They had returned home on foot afterwards and by the end Madame Maigret was shaky on her heels. Not for years had they both done so much walking.

They slept with the window open and almost at once it was a new day starting, with the sun more bright than when they had left the Boulevard Montmartre, the air cooler, and the familiar morning noises.

They had made no plans for spending their time, and as she was having her breakfast, Madame Maigret asked:

“Shall I do the shopping?”

What was the point? To do the shopping was the same as preparing a meal. That meant that he would have to be home at a fixed time.

“We can eat at home all the year round.”

“Except when you don’t come back for your meal.”

It was true that if one counted up the days when a case obliged him to take his meals in town, there weren’t a great many left when they ate alone together in the flat.

All the more reason for it to be fun to lunch or dine out with her.

No shopping! No ties! A first pipe of the day at the window, watching the puppet motions of the little man from Catoire & Potut’s. In the bistro opposite, the barkeeper, in his shirt-sleeves, was reading a newspaper spread out on his zinc counter.

Maigret could have had the papers brought up every morning by the concierge, but that would have deprived him of the pleasure of going to fetch them himself.

Eventually he got dressed, while his wife was seeing to the housework.

“I’ll come and fetch you presently. I haven’t thought yet where we’ll go.”

“Anyway, today I’m putting on flat-heeled shoes.”

New habits were forming. He bought his papers at the same kiosk, waited till he was seated outside the café in the Place de la République before opening them, and the waiter already knew what to serve him.

### CRIME OR ACCIDENT?

The toxicological specialist who had carried out an examination of the internal organs, had submitted his report. For some reason or other, Police Headquarters were proving less niggardly with information than at the start of the case, and the papers printed a summary of the report.

There had been discovered, in Eveline Jave’s intestines, a considerable quantity of digitalis.

We consulted Professor Loireau on this matter, and he has provided us with some interesting facts.

Digitalis is a drug fairly commonly employed to slow up the movements of the heart. The dose administered to Mme. Jave was not excessive and, in normal circumstances, should not have proved fatal.

What is disturbing is that this drug should have been administered at all to her, since, in view of her state of health, it was strictly contra-indicated. Eveline Jave had had a slow pulse-rate since childhood. In the event of an attack, Professor Loireau assured us, she needed a stimulant of the cardiac muscle such as camphor, the one most generally used, or Pressyl, fashionable nowadays.

Digitalis, on the contrary, became an almost certainly fatal drug to her, since instead of remedying the effects of a slow pulse-rate, it aggravated them. Had Mme. Jave suffered an attack during her brief call at the Boulevard Haussmann? Is the contusion on her forehead the result of a fall she might have had during the course of this attack?

Did the doctor on the spot—and it is not known which one it was—mistake the ampoule, in his panic, and inject her with digitalis instead of camphor or Pressyl?

Or again, did he, wanting to kill her, deliberately employ a drug of which he could predict the effects on the sick woman?

Maigret stayed a few minutes watching the people pass by in front of the terrace, then asked for a *jeton* and went and shut himself in the telephone box.

“Hallo! Pardon?”

The latter had already recognized his voice.

“Am I disturbing you?”

“I was going out to do my round, but I’ve still a few minutes in hand.”

“Have you done your reading?”

“There must be several hundred of us doctors in Paris who’ve pounced on the papers.”

“What do you think of it?”

“The article isn’t strictly scientific, but the general drift is correct.”

“Could it have been an accident?”

“Strictly speaking, yes. I’ve just been checking on it myself. Certain substances for injection are issued in characteristic types of ampoule, and with these it is more or less impossible for a doctor to make a mistake.”

“In what way characteristic?”

“There are ampoules with only one end tapering, others with both ends like that. Others show the name of the product as well. There are even some which are coloured.”

“In the present circumstances?”

“Camphor, which is sold by most laboratories, occurs in ampoules differing in shape in various ways. Pressyl is more recognizable. I’ve just looked out in my own cabinet an ampoule of digitalis and compared it with a camphor ampoule.”

“Are they similar?”

“Enough for a man in a hurry, in distress, to be able to make a mistake.”

“What’s your own opinion?”

“I haven’t one. I’ve merely heard that Jave, yesterday evening, sent for Dr. Mérou. He’s a cardiologist. I don’t know if Jave himself also has heart trouble, or whether he wanted to consult Mérou about what happened to his wife.”

“Do you know Mérou?”

“He’s a friend of mine, but under the circumstances he won’t say anything and it would be improper on my part to ask him.”

“You haven’t learnt anything else about Dr. Jave?”

There was a pause at the other end of the wire. Doctors stick together, despite everything.

“You’re still keeping away from the Quai des Orfèvres?”

“Thank heavens, yes.”

“It’s only a rumour going the rounds of the medical world. No need for me to tell you that it’s in a whirl and that we’re all trying to get to the bottom of things. Yesterday I was told that, despite his keeping up flashy appearances, Jave was in debt and for the past few months has been at his wits’ end.”

“But what about his wife’s money?”

“I don’t know any more about it than that. Don’t pass this piece of information on to the police; they’ll discover it soon enough on their own. I don’t want it coming from me.”

“One last question, about the ampoules. You’ve handled both sorts of ampoule and you have the automatic reactions normal to your profession: could you have made a mistake?”

He sensed a hesitation on the part of his unseen interlocutor. Pardon spoke at last, weighing his words:

“If it were to do with my wife, possibly. We easily lose our heads where ourselves or our loved ones are concerned.”

“Or your mistress?”

Pardon gave a little laugh.

“I haven’t had a mistress since my hospital days.”

Maigret returned to the terrace and sucked dreamily on the stem of his pipe. It was nearly time for his first glass of beer and he was following the slow movements of the hands of the electric clock.

“Another *jeton*!” he eventually called for from the waiter.

In the box he rang the newspaper where Lassagne worked. With luck, at this time of day, the red-headed reporter would be at work writing his article.

“Monsieur Lassagne, please, mademoiselle.”

“What name is it?”

“Tell him it’s to give him some information about the Jave case.”

The paper must receive dozens of telephone calls of the same type, the majority of them originating from fools or madmen, but at Headquarters, too, all were listened to patiently, since it sometimes happened that a positive clue would be obtained in this way.

“Hallo... Who’s calling?”

Lassagne had a spluttering voice.

“That doesn’t matter, Monsieur Lassagne. I haven’t any information strictly speaking, but I’d like to point out to you an omission in your articles.”

He was disguising his voice, with some success.

“Be quick then. I’m in a hurry. What omission?”

“Where was Josépha on Saturday afternoon?”

The reporter replied curtly:

“In the flat.”

He was going to hang up, but the chief-inspector was too quick for him.

“In which flat? That’s just what I’m getting at. Listen to me a minute. The Javes only had two servants besides the nurse. That’s not a lot for a flat as grand as theirs, I mean the flat they lived in. On the other hand, in the flat opposite, the doctor’s

one, there was nobody, once the cleaning was done, except to open the door to patients.”

Lassagne had not hung up and Maigret could hear his breathing.

“I think I see what you mean.”

“Where would Josépha have been, during consulting hours? In the doctor’s rooms? In the waiting-room? In the bedroom? In the bathroom? Would she have stayed for hours doing nothing when there was work to be done in the flat opposite. I’m convinced that the bell by the doctor’s door is connected to the other flat.”

“You won’t tell me who you are on the ’phone?”

“My name’s of no concern.”

“Thank you, then. I’ll check on it.”

Maigret was feeling slightly ridiculous to be playing the rôle of the maniacs who bombard the newspapers like this, but it was the only means for him to obtain some information which intrigued him.

Most likely Janvier already knew the answer. Only he couldn’t call Janvier. For a moment he had thought of approaching Lapointe, asking him to keep the secret of his presence in Paris. Maybe it was because it was too easy that he hadn’t done so?

The question was important. It was naturally possible that Josépha had lied all along the line, that she had seen Madame Jave and her husband arriving or leaving. But it was also possible that she was in the flat opposite and that she knew nothing of what was happening the other side of the landing.

Eveline Jave, of course, had no key to the flat. But was Négrel expecting her. Could she not have telephoned to him from Orly, or even before taking off from Nice?

That left the concierge. Had the concierge been lying? The living-room of her lodge was separated from the kitchen and the bedroom by a thick curtain, as is the case in numerous

buildings. Was she busy behind the curtain at the time of Eveline Jave's arrival?

He ordered his beer, drank it slowly, and though he continued to think about the case, he did so unemotionally, in a detached sort of way. He could imagine the fever that must be reigning in the Quai des Orfèvres, the impatient telephone calls from Comélieau who always found that the police were not working fast enough.

Janvier knew, through the inspector on duty in the Boulevard Haussmann, that Jave had summoned Dr. Mérou. He knew too, from the Flying Squad men who had questioned the nurse at Cannes, under what circumstances Eveline Jave, followed by her husband, had left the Villa Marie-Thérèse.

There had been no announcement of the arrival of the nurse in Paris, nor of the child, and it was understandable that they were both being kept at a distance.

He felt like going for a walk and made his way along the quays, giving the Prefecture as wide a berth as possible. At Saint-Germain-des-Prés he advanced only with caution, and at the corner of the Rue des Saints-Pères he had to halt, since young Lapointe was smoking a cigarette on the edge of the pavement a hundred yards ahead of him.

It made him smile, though it caused him a tiny pang at the heart even as he did so. From a distance he took a look at the building answering to the description in the paper.

"Taxi!"

He was going back home. None of this was any concern of his. He was on holiday and Pardon had insisted that it should be a proper holiday.

"Have you made up your mind what we're doing?"

"Not yet."

"Have you got any ideas?"

She hadn't and they looked at each other, gravely at first, then smiling, and finally they both burst out laughing together.



After five days' holiday, after promising themselves so many undiscovered pleasures, they had already reached the point of no longer knowing how to pass their days.

"Where could we go and have lunch? You didn't want me to do the shopping. I can always buy some cold meat."

He hesitated, nodded his head. The flat had never seemed so restful to him before. With its country-style furniture, it made him think of a house in a little provincial town, and behind the shutters, which they were keeping half-closed because of the sun, there reigned a soothing twilight.

"Off you go then!"

He called to her when she was already on the landing.

"Bring me a crawfish scallop."

His favourite dish when they were poor and he was too late at the butcher's.

He poured himself a glass of apéritif, sat down in an armchair, with his tie undone, and smoked his pipe, musing. The heat was clogging his senses, making his eyelids prick. He thought he could hear the voice of the girl in the Place du Tertre who had so desperately wanted to read a love-story into the Boulevard Haussmann case.

He was no longer so sure about it. Jave had debts. How had he contracted them? Was he a gambler? Was he speculating on the stock exchange? For the running expenses of the household were by no means out of keeping with his professional practice combined with his wife's income.

A second household?

Gilbert Négrel, for his part, had a fiancée who was probably already his mistress, since she was coming to see him in his bachelor rooms. What part did Eveline play between the two men?

Why did Maigret have the impression that she had been frustrated on both sides?

It was only an intuition. He was picturing again the photograph, the thin thighs, the expression which was lacking

in self-confidence, seeming to plead for indulgence or sympathy.

As a small boy, at Paray-le-Frésil, he had felt sorry for rabbits because he thought nature had only created them to serve as food for stronger animals.

Eveline reminded him of the rabbits. She was defenceless. When, as a girl, she used to wander along the beach at Beuzec, couldn't she have been picked up by any man, provided only he showed her a little consideration and tenderness?

Jave had married her. She had borne him a child.

Had Négrel in turn entered into her life, as the young girl in love had claimed the day before?

He finished his drink, put his pipe back between his teeth, and when Madame Maigret returned a little later, the pipe was hanging down over his chin, for Maigret had dozed off.

It was a real snack dinner, just as when they were a young married couple and still lived in furnished rooms where cooking was not allowed. Madame Maigret, however, was keeping an anxious eye on him.

"I wonder if you hadn't better telephone to Janvier."

"Why?"

"Not so you should get involved in the case, but for him to keep you informed. There are moments I get the impression you're fretting. You're not used to being out of touch and having to wait for the newspapers."

He was tempted. It was easy. But Janvier would be sure to ask his advice. And one thing would lead to another and he would find himself back at his desk in his office in the Quai des Orfèvres, running the whole police machine.

"No!" he decided.

"Why?"

"I can't do that to Janvier."

That was true too. The latter was having his chance to see a sensational case through to a successful conclusion all on his

own. He was probably in fear and trembling over it, but at the same time he was spending the best days of his career.

“Are you going to have a rest?”

He again said no, for the afternoon papers would soon be out and he was eager to learn whether Lassagne had found the answer to his question.

“Let’s go for a walk,” he decided.

He waited patiently till she had done the washing-up and he was even on the point of going to help her.

“Are we going far?”

“I don’t know yet.”

“You don’t think there’s going to be a storm?”

“If it rains, we’ll go inside a café.”

They made their way gently as far as the Saint-Martin canal, where he had had occasion to go so many times on a case, and where he had never yet been with his wife. A few large white clouds had invaded the sky, and to the east there was one heavier than the rest, with a darker grey centre that made one think of a swelling ready to burst. The air was hot and breathless.

The moment he spotted a news-vendor he reached out his arm, and as on the day before he bought the two rival afternoon papers.

“Let’s sit down somewhere and take a look.”

Madame Maigret was looking apprehensively at the little bistros on the quay which to her eyes didn’t look at all inviting.

“Don’t be scared. They’re decent fellows.”

“All of them?”

He shrugged his shoulders. True enough, scarcely a week passed without a corpse being found in the canal. Apart from that...

“Do you think the glasses are clean?”

“Certainly not.”

“Are you going to have a drink even so?”

There were only three tables outside the bar he had chosen, opposite a barge unloading bricks. Inside, a young man in a black sweater and espadrilles was leaning on the counter and talking in low tones to the owner.

Maigret ordered a *marc* for himself, and a coffee for his wife, who wouldn't drink it

### **Toxicologist's Disturbing Report**

He had already read all this in the morning papers, except that Lassagne had had time to perfect the story and to interview several well-known doctors. Their opinion was practically the same as Pardon's: a mistake was possible; but it was not likely.

Lassagne had found a precedent in his paper's archives. It concerned a doctor in the South of France in whose house had been discovered, also in a cupboard, the corpse of one of his patients.

The doctor in question, at his trial, had pleaded error, claiming that he had mistaken the ampoule, and then, faced with a dead body, had lost his head.

“I was scared that the maid might come into my surgery and see the corpse. It was a stupid thing to do. To give myself time to think, I shoved it in a cupboard.”

He was over head and ears in debt. The patient's wallet, which contained a considerable sum, had never been recovered, and the doctor had been sentenced to life imprisonment.

Did Lassagne know that Jave, too, had debts? If so, he didn't mention it. Instead, he printed as a sub-heading:

*Where was Josépha?*

And thus Maigret had the answer to the question he had posed that morning. Without being conceited about it, he none the less gave a smirk of satisfaction, for he had not been

mistaken, despite the fact that he had nothing more to go on than the facts available to the general public.

Lassagne explained the point about the two flats, the two doors facing each other. Once the cleaning of the professional rooms was completed each morning, Josépha used indeed to cross over to the other side of the landing, and it was in the flat also that she was to be found during the afternoon. The bell would warn her when a patient rang at the door opposite.

The Saturday of the drama, she was in the living apartment, where, as on any other day, she had opened the windows and done the dusting. Lassagne had gone further, for Maigret's telephone call had set him thinking. Three times he had endeavoured to enter the house without being seen by the concierge. Twice she had stopped him on his way. The third time he had been able to reach the lift without being noticed.

So it wasn't impossible that Eveline Jave should have gone up to her flat without the concierge's knowledge.

But should one deduce from this that Jave could have done so in his turn, and then left the house under the same conditions?

Someone, besides, had left with a parcel under their arm, since the young woman's clothes had disappeared. Had the concierge been asked whether Dr. Négrel, on leaving at half-past five, was carrying a parcel?

"Do you think it's an accident?"

Madame Maigret was beginning to be fascinated by the case, though she was affecting an air of disinterest.

"Anything's possible."

"Have you read what they say about the fiancée?"

"Not yet."

In his own paper, that bit came only on the third page. A photograph of a nice-looking girl, with a frank face, wearing a spotless blouse. She was looking openly at the camera.

For heading there was:

## WE ARE TO BE MARRIED THIS AUTUMN

She didn't say: "We were to be."

She was an optimist, confident in herself and in her fiancé.  
*"We are to be ..."*

Lassagne had not had much sleep the last four days, to judge by the amount of work he was getting through.

Yesterday evening we were able to obtain an interview with Doctor Négrel's fiancée. The meeting took place in her home, or rather, since she lives with them, in the home of her parents.

She is Mlle. Martine Chapuis, the only daughter of Maître Noël Chapuis, the well-known barrister.

Neither Maître Chapuis nor his daughter had any objection to receiving us in their flat in the Rue du Bac just round the corner from the Rue des Saints-Pères.

What was even better, the barrister had the courtesy to let us talk alone with his daughter, thus giving her complete freedom to answer our questions.

It should be said at the start that Martine Chapuis, who is twenty-four, is what one would call an up-to-date young lady—in the best sense of the phrase. After taking her law degree, she did a year's philosophy at the Sorbonne only to switch eventually to medicine, in which she attended third-year courses.

Apart from her intelligence and wide interests, she is an accomplished sportswoman. She goes skiing every winter and has her teaching diploma in physical culture.

Far from finding her depressed, we had before us a young person full of confidence, almost smiling.

"It's quite true: Gilbert and I have been engaged for six months. We have known each other for a year, though I waited a few months before introducing him to my parents. They are just as pleased with him as I am."

"Where did you first meet each other?"

"At Professor Lebier's lectures which I am attending. Gilbert is the professor's assistant."

“Do you intend to go on with medicine and to work with your husband?”

“That’s our plan. I hope to help him at least till we have children. After that we’ll see.”

“Did you know Madame Jave?”

“I never met her.”

“Has your fiancé ever spoken to you of her?”

“Only in passing.”

“Did he speak of her as a friend?”

“You can be franker with me than that. I see quite clearly what you are getting at. What you want to know is whether Madame Jave was Gilbert’s mistress.”

“I didn’t like to put the question quite as crudely as that.”

“Why not? Everyone else puts it like that. It’s understandable. It’s obvious that Gilbert had mistresses before he knew me and I’m not so sure he hasn’t had them since. I’m not jealous of little things like that. As for Madame Jave, I should be surprised if there had been anything between them.”

“Why?”

“Because of Gilbert’s character. What interests him more than anything else is his work.”

“More than you?”

“Probably. He could have settled down several years ago now, but prefers the research he does with Prof. Lebier. Money doesn’t mean anything to him. He has few needs. You’ve seen his flat.”

“I know that you’ve been there.”

“I don’t hide the fact. I haven’t even hidden it from my father. We are in love. We are getting married in the autumn. If I want to see him, I don’t see why I shouldn’t go to his place. This is no longer the age of chaperons. Gilbert has had affairs, as I’ve told you, but he has always avoided liaisons which lead to complications and waste of time.”

“He could have been in love with Eveline Jave. Love isn’t a thing you can control.”

“If he had been, I should have known about it.”

“You haven’t tried to see him again since he was questioned by the police?”

“I’ve telephoned him several times. In fact we spend almost the whole day on the telephone. If I haven’t been to the Rue des Saints-Pères, it’s because he prefers to leave me out of this business as far as possible and because there are photographers continually outside his house.”

“What was your father’s reaction?”

She hesitated for a second.

“He was put out to begin with. It’s not pleasant, especially for a barrister, to be mixed up directly or indirectly with a situation of this kind. We had a chat together about it. My father and I are great friends. It was he who telephoned Gilbert to offer his services in case of need.”

“Did he give him legal advice?”

“I didn’t listen to their conversation. All I know is that if Gilbert is questioned again by the examining magistrate, as seems likely, father will stay by him as his lawyer.”

“Did you see your fiancé on Saturday evening? I presume you usually spend Sundays together.”

“I didn’t see him on Saturday evening, because my parents and I left Paris for the country Saturday midday. We have a little house at Seineport where we spend weekends. Gilbert came to join us on Sunday morning by the early train. He hasn’t got a car.”

“He didn’t seem preoccupied?”

“He was the same as ever. We spent part of the day canoeing, and father, who had to work early on Monday, took him back that evening to Paris in his car.”

“Did you ever have occasion to go and see your fiancé in the Boulevard Haussmann?”

“Once, when I was in the area. I wanted to get to know the place where he worked. I like to be familiar with the atmosphere he lives in, so that I can be with him in spirit.”

“Josépha let you in?”



“The maid, yes. I didn’t then know that she was called Josépha.”

“You waited in the anteroom?”

“Like a patient. There were two people in front of me.”

“Did you go through into any of the other rooms apart from the front consulting-room?”

“I went into every room.”

“Including the rooms in the flat.”

“No. I’m talking of the professional rooms, those on the left.” She showed no embarrassment, no hesitation. I was bold enough to go on: “Including the bedroom?”

And without blushing, she looked me straight in the eye and answered: “Yes, the bedroom and the bathroom full of trunks.”

Maigret passed the article to his wife, and while she was reading, he never ceased watching her out of the corner of his eye, for he knew in advance what passages she would jib at. She didn’t let him down. Twice or three times, she heaved a sigh. At the end, instead of turning towards him, she stared fixedly at the barge unloading. “Funny sort of girl,” she murmured.

To tease her, he pretended not to hear. After a while she asked: “Do you approve of it?”

“What?”

“Didn’t you read? The visits to the Rue des Saints-Pères. The bedroom... In my day...”

He hesitated. He didn’t want to upset her, but he ran the risk nevertheless:

“Don’t you remember? The little wood, in the Chevreuse valley...”

If Martine Chapuis hadn’t blushed, Madame Maigret herself went red as a beetroot.

“You’re not going to make out that that’s the same thing?”

“Why not?”

“It was a week before our marriage.”

“It’s only two months before theirs.”

“If they get married!”

“If they don’t get married, it won’t be her fault.”

She sulked with him for nearly a quarter of an hour. They were reaching the end of the canal, having walked beside the water’s edge and stopped behind each fisherman, when she smiled at last, unable to be cross with him any longer.

“Why did you say that?”

“Because it’s true.”

“And would you have told the journalists about it, as if it was something to boast about?”

Finding no answer to this question, he preferred to fill his pipe. Just as he was stopping to light it, large drops of water were beginning to smash on the ground and on to his hat.

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## V

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The storm had gone on well into the night and broken the weather, which for more than a week had been set fair. That morning the air was almost cool, with a greyish mist drifting about the streets and the sun as pale as in February.

It wasn’t this which made Maigret morose. Just as he was leaving to go and fetch his papers, his wife had asked him, as on the other mornings:

“Have you got any plans for today?”

He had said no, as on the other days too.

“Would it bore you to have lunch at home?”

He hadn’t realized straight away what she was getting at.

“Why should it bore me?”

It was then that she had sighed:

“My feet are aching so. I’d like a rest for a day.”

In other words it wasn't the restaurant lunch she was worried about, but the perambulations across Paris to which her husband afterwards subjected her. What day was it? Since he had been on holiday, he had no longer bothered to think. It must be Friday, and she was already worn out.

"Be back soon," he had muttered.

"You're not disappointed?"

"Not a bit."

"Anyway, I must sort out my dresses."

Each day, as a matter of fact, to please him, she had worn a different dress, and she hadn't all that many summer dresses.

All the same, perhaps he ought not to have made her eat in a suspicious-looking bistro, off the Boulevard de la Chapelle, and then walked her along in the rain! He had thought she was enjoying it. They had both been soaked, and each time a squall had caught them, Maigret called out to her:

"Imagine you're at the seaside!"

It didn't seriously matter. Her feet probably really were hurting her; they had always been sensitive.

He bought his papers, sat down in his corner of the terrace, despite the nip in the air, ordered his already traditional cup of coffee.

There was nothing in the morning papers. They merely reproduced, with fewer details, what the evening papers had printed the day before.

It was like a blank, all of a sudden, as if the case had reached the doldrums. He felt cheated. His first thought was: "What can they be up to, then?"

He thought of Janvier and the others at the Quai des Orfèvres, whose job it was to resolve the problem, and several minutes went by before his sense of humour regained the upper hand and he could laugh at himself.

He had just been reacting like the typical reader. He had not been issued with his twice-daily dole and he was in a huff over

it. Like the public at large, he had felt for a while that the police force was not doing its job, and he could now better understand the persistence of the Press, when they laid siege to his door during the course of a sensational case.

“It doesn’t matter what you give us, inspector, but give us something!”

Thereupon he read the rest of the paper, the state of the weather at the various health resorts and the fashionable seaside beaches, some wisecracks by film-stars, the road accidents, and even a long article on the future of television.

The rest of the morning passed uneventfully. He walked the streets, as the fancy took him, went into a couple of little bars for a glass of apéritif. When he returned home, he was greeted by a *poulet bonne-femme* and Madame Maigret feeling sorry for what she had said that morning.

“You’re not cross?”

“Why?”

“I hope you don’t imagine I’m bored with you? It really was my feet...”

“I know.”

“It needn’t stop you from going out.”

Perhaps there was going to be a fresh storm, or merely some rain, for the sun had disappeared and the sky was a uniform grey. He didn’t know where he was going but he went out none the less, still grumpy. Instead of turning left, once he reached the Boulevard Voltaire, he turned right, and the rain began to fall heavily, in a kind of broad hatching, the moment he reached the Place Voltaire.

He went into a café full of regulars, opposite the *mairie*, where he knew there were billiard tables in the back room, and it struck him that if he could find a partner, he wouldn’t be averse to knocking up a couple of hundred points. He used not to be a bad billiards-player in the old days. He liked the movement of the balls which, once they’ve been given the required impulse, take on an almost intelligent motion of their

own, and he liked too the noise they make as they click together.

The two billiard-tables were covered with their dustcloths. On the other hand, near the front window, there were some belote-players and Maigret sat down not far from them. He could watch two games at once, from his place on the bench, and before long one of the players was turning round to wink at him every time he picked up good cards.

It was quite enjoyable, after all. The oldest of the four must be a retired member of the senior ranks of the civil service, since he was an officer of the Legion of Honour ; his partner was being called "Professor". A grammar-school master, probably.

"The rest are mine. Spade, spade, and trump..."

The retired civil servant was the only one to reach out a hand when a newspaper-seller entered the café. Anyway he merely laid the paper on the next table without glancing at it and devoted his attention to his cards.

At last some news had come out. As Maigret surmised, Police Headquarters had not remained inactive, but it's not possible to provide the Press with sensational news twice a day.

Several headlines appeared in succession on the front page, the first in heavier type than the rest:

## **INSPECTOR JANVIER AT CANNES**

### **THE DEAD WOMAN'S JEWELS**

This was a lot all at once and Maigret stopped watching the card-players to plunge into his reading.

In the last twenty-four hours (wrote little Lassagne) the Boulevard Haussmann case has just taken a new turn which promises surprising developments.

Inspector Janvier, in charge of the investigation during the absence of Chief-Inspector Maigret who is still on holiday, appears to be getting back into form.

At the beginning of the enquiry an investigating warrant was sent to the Alpes Maritimes Flying Squad. It

was instructed to interrogate Mlle. Jusserand, little Michèle Jave's nurse, who is still at the Villa Marie-Thérèse.

What information did Police Headquarters obtain as a result? This we were not told, but yesterday morning one of the reporters at the Quai de Orfèvres followed Inspector Janvier as he was careering off by car.

After shadowing him (if we dare put it that way) our colleague found himself at Orly where the inspector rushed into the plane for Nice a few seconds before it took off.

We immediately telephoned our correspondent on the Côte d'Azur and have thereby kept abreast of new developments in the case.

As we have already said, Mlle. Jusserand had up to now refused to make any statement. It was all the Press could do just to catch an occasional glimpse of her with the child in the garden of the Villa Marie-Thérèse.

This villa, rented for six weeks by the Jave family, is situated just outside the town, half-way up La Californie. It is a yellow-painted building constructed at the turn of the century in the rococo style popular at that time. The garden is quite large and planted with eucalyptus and shady pines.

For three days the local reporters and photographers have been kicking their heels in vain outside the garden-gate, which opened only to let tradesmen in.

When Inspector Janvier arrived he was admitted with an inspector from Cannes, and their interview with Mlle. Jusserand lasted more than three hours.

Mlle. Jusserand is a woman of about fifty, or perhaps more, with a severe manner and a pale, expressionless face. She did not look very agreeable. For a long time she was a nurse in a private clinic and it was there, it appears, that Dr. Jave engaged her when the child was born.

She is unmarried and, to look at her, it would be difficult to suppose that there has ever been a man in her life.

Our correspondent has provided us with a few details on the life that the Jave family led up to the moment of

the tragedy.

They had the big grey Pontiac down there in which they had come from Paris by road. It does not seem that Eveline Jave had ever driven it.

The doctor used it every morning to drive his wife, the nurse and the child to the beach. He did not stay there himself, but went straight away to a tennis-court nearby where he practised for two hours with a coach.

On the beach Eveline Jave kept to herself.

She bathed with the child and then stayed stretched out on the sand, keeping under a sunshade without ever showing her body to the sun, while the nurse looked after the child.

About midday the doctor came back to pick them up and everyone returned to the Villa Marie-Thérèse.

Our correspondent had an opportunity to chat with the cook, who was engaged locally for the period of their holiday and asked her some questions:

“Was it a happy family?”

“I don’t know.”

“Did they ever quarrel?”

“I never heard anything.”

“Did you ever catch them kissing?”

“Oh, sir...!”

The doctor sometimes spent his afternoons reading medical books at the bottom of the garden, sometimes walking along the Croisette, where he invariably took his apéritif at the bar of the Majestic.

Inspector Janvier looked uneasy as he came out of the Villa Marie-Thérèse, refused to make any statement, and made his way to the airport. But this morning in Paris, probably after consultation with Judge Comélieau, he decided to receive the Press and give them some information on the results of his journey.

It went off rather like one of those famous press conferences in the White House, though on a smaller scale, of course, with everyone asking him questions. The inspector did not answer all of them.

First of all, here is how, in a few words, Jave and his wife spent the last hours before her death. The account is

from Mlle. Jusserand.

On Friday, at about nine in the evening, when her husband had gone out for a walk in the neighbourhood, Eveline Jave made a 'phone-call to Paris and had a fairly long conversation.

Inspector Janvier revealed the fact that the number she called had been traced and that it was found to be that of Dr. Négrel, at his home in the Rue des Saint-Pères.

A little later Mme. Jave told the nurse:

“Tomorrow I shall be away all day. I'm going to see a friend at Saint-Tropez.”

And she gave her instructions about the house.

Probably she told the same story to her husband. She had to catch the diesel train leaving Cannes at eight-ten and ordered a taxi to take her to the station.

It is at this point that we find a remarkable reversal of the situation. It had been admitted that Jave had left on his wife's trail, that at Nice he had missed the nine-fifteen plane and that he had taken the London plane in order to catch up with her as soon as possible.

The statement by Mlle. Jusserand destroys this theory and shows the doctor of the Boulevard Haussmann in a new light.

Jave in fact left the Villa Marie-Thérèse soon after his wife, just as though he had been waiting till the coast was clear, and drove his own car to Nice Airport where he missed the Paris plane by only two or three minutes.

He made no inquiry about his wife from any of the officials. According to the nurse, he was unaware at that moment that Mme. Jave had caught the plane and thought she was really with a friend in Saint-Tropez.

It was he, in the event, who took advantage of his wife's absence to go on an escapade.

And it really was an escapade, as police checks were going to prove.

Maigret had to turn over the page of his newspaper, and automatically followed a hand of the card-game. On page three, there was a fresh headline.

SECRET LIFE OF DR. JAVE



We cannot do better than reproduce here some of the questions and answers that were exchanged in Inspector Janvier's office. (This is really the office of Chief-Inspector Maigret, but the Inspector has settled himself in there.) Maigret winced involuntarily.

"Was Mademoiselle Jusserand willing to talk?"

"No. In fact, we had to drag the answers from her one by one. It was quite a job."

"Does she seem devoted to her employers?"

"I have the impression that she is devoted to a hatred of all men."

"What were her relations with Madame Jave?"

"I don't think she liked her."

"In fact she doesn't like anybody?"

"She likes the child, which she thinks of rather as her own, and herself. She has a very high opinion of herself."

"Is she a woman to listen at keyholes?"

Here Janvier had risked a tiny remark which was going to put the backs up of a few million women readers.

"Don't all women listen at keyholes?"

"Do you trust her evidence?"

"So far everything she's said, or almost everything, has been found true."

"Was the doctor having an affair in Paris?"

"Yes. More than an affair. It could almost be described as a grand passion."

"Did his wife know about it?"

"Not officially."

"But Mademoiselle Jusserand was in on it?"

"Apparently."

"Was anyone else in the secret?"

"Josépha."

"Why?"

"Because the affair was with her daughter, Antoinette, who lives in the Rue Washington, just round the corner from the Boulevard Haussmann."

"Did Josépha approve?"

"Yes."

Inspector Janvier then provided us with a few disturbing details. It turned out that about two years earlier Antoinette Chauvet, Josépha's daughter, who was then a shop-girl in one of the big stores on the Grands Boulevards, developed consumption and Dr. Jave suggested looking after her.

We should note in passing that the girl has a physical resemblance to Mme. Jave. Like her, she is rather thin, with irregular features and eyes that look frightened.

Jave formed the habit of going to see her in the Rue Washington. As she needed complete rest he helped support her, and even sent her for two months to the country.

On her return the visits continued and did not stop for two years.

It was this state of affairs that led certain people to say that she was a young girl of doubtful morals. In fact, even when she had recovered, she did not go back to work, and every time he had a moment free between professional visits Dr. Jave would hurry off to the Rue Washington.

"Even when Josépha was there?"

"Even when Josépha was there. In her eyes, Jave is a sort of demi-god entitled to everything."

"It was to Antoinette Chauvet's that Jave was hurrying on Saturday?"

"The concierge at the Rue Washington confirmed that. She saw him arrive just three-quarters of an hour after the London plane landed at Orly."

"Till what time did he stay?"

"Wait a moment. Josépha was out at that time, so we have only the evidence of Antoinette. According to her, Jave didn't leave the Rue Washington till seven o'clock, just in time to get through the rush-hour traffic and catch the eight o'clock train at the Gare de Lyon."

"And Josépha?"

"She still claims that she left the Boulevard Haussmann shortly after Dr. Négrel, say about six o'clock, and went to her daughter's."

"Where she found Jave?"

"Yes."

“She stayed with the pair of them till seven?”

“So she says.”

“So that Jave has an alibi?”

Inspector Janvier wasn't quite so sure. Given the devotion of Antoinette and her mother to the doctor, their evidence can certainly be considered suspect, and moreover the concierge who saw Jave come in did not see him go out. It is true that at about that time she went to a grocer's near by and that the lodge was left empty for fifteen or twenty minutes.

Suppose Philippe Jave left the Rue Washington at about seven o'clock, wouldn't he have had time to run up the Boulevard Haussmann, kill his wife, shut her in the cupboard and hurry off to the Gare de Lyon?

It's not very likely, but a reconstruction ought to be staged today in order to clarify this point.

Maigret was worried. There was something that didn't fit in with the story so far. Hadn't Pardon confided to him that Jave was over head and ears in debt and didn't know which way to turn?

Antoinette, in her modest lodgings in the Rue Washington, could not be a very expensive woman to keep.

He was slightly jealous too, jealous of Janvier, not because of his success, but for a silly reason. Every time an investigation involves expenses or journeys, there has to be a real struggle, at Headquarters, with those who dispense the funds, and they scrutinize all expense accounts with infuriating thoroughness.

How did Janvier manage to get to Cannes by air? They must have attached exceptional importance to this case to untie the purse-strings to that extent.

### THE WIFE'S JEWELS

Every now and then, one of the card-players would glance at him, and one of them even leant across towards him to cast an eye over the paper. “Is it Jave?” he asked.

“It's not known yet.”

“I’d say it’s him.”

If he had read the rest of the article he would probably not have been so positive.

Inspector Janvier’s journey to Cannes has brought a further surprise, just as big as the one before.

For several days now the rumour has been going round that the Javes, in spite of their apparently easy circumstances, were not all that wonderfully well off and that the doctor was in debt.

The idea that immediately came to mind was that Jave was leading a double life; that since he was not either a gambler or a speculator he probably had a mistress dependent on him.

What was this abyss that was swallowing up Mme. Jave’s substantial income and the more than respectable fees of her husband?

Once again, it was Mlle. Jusserand who supplied the key to the mystery.

Did she do it out of female spite or unwittingly? It is not for us to judge. The fact remains that at the moment when Inspector Janvier was about to leave she asked him:

“Wouldn’t you like to take the jewel-case? As I’m staying here alone with the child and the cook, I don’t like to take responsibility for it.”

“Where is the case?”

“In Madame’s bedroom. She always takes it with her when she travels and I’m surprised she left it here.”

It turned out to be more like a small trunk, made by a well-known saddler in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. As was to be expected it was locked.

“I know where the key is,” said Mlle. Jusserand, who is definitely well up in what’s what.

She pointed to the drawer of a chest, where the key was indeed slipped under a pile of underclothes.

Inspector Janvier did not conceal from us how surprised he had been when he saw the jewels that the box contained. They have not yet been valued, but at first sight they must be worth about thirty million francs,

rings, necklaces, bracelets, clasps and earrings all from the best shops in the Rue de la Paix.

It is clear now why we have talked of the situation being reversed.

It had been expected that Dr. Jave, whose wife seemed so simple and unadorned, would be found to have an extravagant mistress.

Suddenly it turned out that it was his wife who was upsetting his budget, while his mistress was satisfied with a life of obscurity.

We succeeded in being put through by 'phone to the victim's brother, Yves Le Guérec. He is still at the Hôtel Scribe and he made no pretence to us about the reason for his prolonged stay in Paris.

He intends that the remains of his sister shall be taken to Concarneau to be interred in the family vault.

Now, in his capacity as the husband, it is up to Jave to make that decision.

"Have you put the question to him?"

"I haven't been able to see him or speak to him by 'phone. I've written to him, or rather I got my lawyer to write to him, because I don't want to have any contact with the man, and we have still had no reply."

Is there going to be a battle between the husband and the brother over the corpse?

Le Guérec, when we got in touch with him, did not know about the discovery of the jewels. We asked him:

"Was your sister a dressy woman?"

"Not enough, in my opinion. In spite of her wealth she always refused to be dressed by the fashionable designers and made some of her clothes herself."

"Was she fond of jewels?"

"She wore practically none. When my mother died the family jewels were shared between her and my wife. They weren't very valuable, mostly old-fashioned jewellery. Eveline let my wife do the choosing and didn't bother about her share."

"Yet she possessed thirty million francs' worth of jewels."

"What do you mean?"

“I said thirty million francs’ worth.”

“Whose story is that?”

“They’ve been found at Cannes.”

Le Guérec’s tone of voice suddenly changed at the end of the line.

“What are you getting at?”

“Nothing. I just wondered whether you knew about it, whether even as a young girl your sister already had a passion for diamonds, rubies and emeralds.”

“I suppose she’d have a right to?”

“Naturally.”

“Besides, I’ll have you know that with her share of the income from the factory she could well afford it without needing to call on her husband. It was her money, wasn’t it?”

“In a way, yes...”

“In which case, I don’t see why people are so busy trying to find out what my sister did with it. If she preferred to buy jewels, that was her affair.”

“Of course.”

Whereupon Yves Le Guérec hung up rather savagely.

About midday we went to the Rue Washington, where the pavement was crowded with photographers.

The building in which Antoinette Chauvet has a third-floor room is a bit old, but respectable. As the lift didn’t work, we climbed up on foot, but we had no success when we knocked on the door that was shown us.

A door opened near by. An elderly woman, grey-haired and dressed in black, told us:

“If it’s Mademoiselle Chauvet you’re looking for, she’s not at home.”

“Has she been out long?”

“Two days.”

“You haven’t seen her for two days?”

“No. The only person who’s been in is her mother who came twice, but she has a key.”

“You don’t know whether the young lady took any luggage with her?”

“You call her a young lady? Someone who entertains married men?”

“Why do you say ‘men’? Were there more than one?”

“A girl who entertains one is capable of entertaining others, that’s what I say. And when a mother encourages things like that, I maintain...”

We weren’t able to hear everything that her neighbour thought about Josépha, because, in a paroxysm of indignation, she brusquely beat a retreat and slammed the door shut in our faces.

Where is Antoinette Chauvet? Did she want to escape from the reporters and photographers?

The police must know since they have been in a position to interrogate her, but when we ’phoned Inspector Janvier for her present address, he replied that it would be pointless to disturb her for the time being.

It is difficult, obviously, to sum up the situation. Instead of straightening itself out, the affair is becoming more confused.

A certain number of questions suggest themselves which as yet are impossible to answer.

Did Eveline Jave know about her husband’s affair?

Why did she ’phone Doctor Négrel at his place on Friday evening? (Note that this ’phone call seems to confirm the statements of the concierge in the Rue des Saints-Pères, who claims she saw the young woman go at least twice to see the tenant in her house.)

Why, after making out that she was going to visit a friend at Saint-Tropez, did Mme. Jave take the plane for Paris? Did Eveline and Gilbert Négrel meet? Was the evidence of Antoinette Chauvet and Josépha contrived, and did Dr. Jave really not have time to go to the Boulevard Haussmann before the Blue Train left?

Finally, why did Eveline Jave, who was not interested in dress and wore few jewels, have a kind of morbid passion for collecting them?

Maigret folded up the paper with a sigh and called the waiter across to order another drink. His neighbour asked:

“Is it him?”

“It’s still not known.”

“Take my word for it! Young chaps are seldom jealous enough to start killing. It’s men of your and my age who see red.”

The chief-inspector did his best not to smile. The belote-player could hardly suspect that he was addressing a man who had had to take under his wing every drama there had been in Paris during thirty years.

It remains true that, even if he had known, he would probably have still been as confident of his opinion. The less knowledge or experience people have to back it, the more faith they have in their own judgement.

“The same again, waiter.”

He was squinting across at the two billiard-tables with a childish longing to play. There was indeed a little old man opposite him who had the look of a billiards enthusiast, but he was reading a newspaper as he drank his café-crème and Maigret hadn’t the face to disturb him.

Janvier was acquitting himself well. The chief-inspector was able to make sense of his movements, of the direction of his enquiries. They were probably engaged, at the Quai des Orfèvres or the Boulevard Haussmann, in questioning Dr. Jave all over again.

And Maigret would have given a good deal to be conducting this interrogation himself. He would equally have liked to have half an hour alone with Mademoiselle Jusserand, the nurse who loathed men, and who, of her own accord, without being asked, had disclosed the secret of the jewels.

Josépha posed no sort of problem for him. He had known many others like her, hard-working widows, who had passed all their lives obedient to conventional morals, but who, when it came to their daughters, suddenly showed themselves full of indulgence.

Little Lassagne had written that, in her eyes, Jave was a demi-god. That was understandable. He had saved her daughter’s life. At the outset, he must have taken care of her with almost fatherly tenderness.



No more was it surprising that Jave should have fallen in love with a woman who resembled his wife. It's common enough. All men are more or less attracted by a definite type.

Might it not even go to prove that the doctor, when at Concarneau, had not made a marriage for money, but a marriage of love?

He had found himself faced by a delicate girl, shut in on herself, leading a joyless life.

Had Eveline regarded herself later on as different from what he had thought? Was there a clue in the business of the jewels stored up like provisions in an ant-heap?

Chance had acquainted him, three years later, with another girl, feeble and sick too, her body threatened by disease, like the first.

Was it odd that things should have been set off all over again as had happened once before?

He had departed for Cannes with his family, leaving Antoinette in Paris. His wife told him that she was going to spend the day, and perhaps the following night, at a woman friend's, at Saint-Tropez.

Hadn't he taken advantage of it to dash to the airport in order to have a few hours with Antoinette?

It held together. One might raise a certain number of objections, but one could equally well find answers to them.

If that was how things stood with him, he had no reason to go to the Boulevard Haussmann. Not so long as Négrel was there, at any rate. After six o'clock, once the coast was clear.

What would he have gone there for?

On the other hand, why, since he had come by air, had he not returned by the plane which would have landed him at Nice the same evening, with the result that Eveline would have known nothing of his jaunt, since presumably he thought her to be at Saint-Tropez?

Amongst the questions he posed, Lassagne inserted: Was Madame Jave aware of her husband's affair?

He was forgetting another, equally plausible, to which there was no answer so far:

Was Dr. Jave aware of the relationship between his wife and his locum?

For there was a relationship between them, on whatever level, since Madame Jave had telephoned the young doctor on Friday evening.

The evidence given by the concierge could no longer be suspect. She had certainly, on two occasions at least, called at the Rue des Saints-Pères.

If Jave knew his wife to be in Paris, and not at Saint-Tropez, he had not missed the plane, but had deliberately caught a different one.

What was Janvier going to do? Maigret could imagine the impatience of the hot-headed Judge Comélieau; he must be insisting that Dr. Négrel be arrested.

It was still raining. There was still nobody to make up a game of billiards. Maigret paid for his drinks, nodded vaguely at the belote-players, and went out, his hands in his pockets.

It occurred to him that if he were Janvier...

It was not raining uncomfortably hard and he walked without noticing it as far as the Place de la République, went into his usual morning restaurant, ordered a beer, and pen and paper, and settled down to tracing printed letters, as he had already done once before.

His message was as brief as the first, again addressed to Janvier:

IF I WERE YOU I WOULD GO TO CONCARNEAU

All the more so since the management had proved generous enough to pay for flights to Nice!...

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## VI

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The unsigned piece of advice sent by Maigret had not had time to reach the Quai des Orfèvres before someone else decided to make the trip to Concarneau and set about it in spectacular style. First of all there had occurred a much more important event, but the chief-inspector was only to learn of it at the same time as the public at large.

He had in due course returned, through the rain, to the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir. Just as he might have done in a seaside hotel, when the weather was bad, he had asked, before even sitting down in his armchair:

“What are we going to do?”

“Whatever you like.”

It was only five in the afternoon and the rest of the day had to be filled in.

“Why shouldn’t we go to the cinema?”

That would be twice in one week, something that hadn’t happened to them for years and years. Only, this time, to make it an occasion, instead of being content with their local cinema, they took the métro and chose a large picture-house in the Champs-Élysées.

It was there that, after the news and the documentary, there was a prolonged silence, followed by the projection on the screen of a text which must have been hurriedly written on a glass slide, as happens at election time and for serious disasters.

### LAST MINUTE NEWS

#### BOULEVARD HAUSSMANN CASE

#### DR. GILBERT NÉGREL ARRESTED AT

#### HIS HOME THIS AFTERNOON

It was an exciting moment, in the vast hall only a third full, after the motion pictures with their supporting sound-track of

music, to see merely a static text which appeared to be cast by an old-fashioned magic lantern. The audience was shifting uneasily in their seats. People coughed here and there, then began whispering.

The screen went blank again, but was still lit up, and it was a photograph of the young doctor which replaced the item of news. He was not alone. He was a member of a group of doctors in white gowns, in a hospital courtyard. A cross, beneath one of the figures, marked the man whom Comélie had just sent to the cells accused of murder.

Finally, that picture dissolved, another took its place, the photograph already published in the papers of Eveline Jave, in her prudish bathing-costume, on the Brittany beach.

Someone, in the darkness of the hall, called out:

“Come off it!”

An elderly man behind Maigret muttered:

“I knew all along it was him.”

The screen darkened again and it was a relief to hear the music introducing the big film, for which the credit titles were beginning to appear.

Maigret could not share in the relief felt by the rest, since, even though he was doing his best to concentrate on the film being shown, he was, despite himself, in the Quai des Orfèvres in spirit; he was picturing Négrel there in his office, where Janvier had certainly installed himself.

All of a sudden Madame Maigret slipped her hand into his, as if she understood, and when they emerged with the crowd, she neither asked him any questions, nor indulged in any comment.

The Champs-Élysées had started its night life of lights, and, like hundreds, thousands of others, they stood still, hesitating, wondering in which restaurant they could go and dine. Eventually, so as not to have to walk, they chose a vast establishment which specialized in fish and sea-food, and found themselves seated at a minute table, with not enough room for Maigret's legs.

It was not till the next morning that he was to learn the rest, when he came to open the morning papers in the Place de la République. The rain had given place to a windy day.

#### MAITRE CHAPUIS AT CONCARNEAU

As was announced on the wireless yesterday evening, examining magistrate Comélieau decided early in the afternoon to issue a warrant of commitment against Dr. Négrel, and Inspector Janvier, accompanied by his colleague Lapointe, went at about three o'clock to the Rue des Saints-Pères.

They found the young doctor with his fiancée, Martine Chapuis, and his future father-in-law, the barrister Noël Chapuis.

All three appeared calm and were obviously prepared for this step.

As he crossed the pavement to get into the police car, Dr. Négrel stopped for a moment to enable the photographers to use their cameras, and, as can be seen in our picture, there was a smile on his lips at once bitter and confident.

Maître Chapuis went with him in the car. As for Martine Chapuis, who stayed behind alone, a prey to the reporters, she merely declared:

"I'm not afraid of anything. Gilbert is innocent."

The interrogation at Police Headquarters lasted only forty minutes, after which, without handcuffs, still self-possessed and almost serenely at his ease, Négrel was taken by two inspectors to one of the cells in the Palais de Justice.

To the reporters who plagued him in the corridor at Police Headquarters, Maître Chapuis announced:

"I am more confident than ever before. In order to defend my client I shall have to uncover the truth and I know that I shall uncover it. This evening I am catching the train for Concarneau."

"Do you think, Maître, that the truth is at Concarneau?"

The barrister merely made a vague gesture, but he did not say so.

This explains why at seven-thirty-five half a dozen reporters caught the train from the Gare Montparnasse at the same time as Dr. Négrel's defending counsel.

The barrister and the reporters travelled in the same compartment and arrived this morning at the port in Brittany.

It may be a coincidence, but Yves Le Guérec, the victim's brother, was in another carriage of the same train. He had no contact with the first lot.

Dr. Jave, for his part, has been keeping to his flat in the Boulevard Haussmann, where Josépha is looking after him. The telephone is still dead. At about six o'clock Inspector Lapointe, who is the youngest inspector in Police Headquarters, paid him a visit and spent almost two hours with him. When he left he refused to make any statement whatever.

According to a piece of information we have been unable to check, Antoinette Chauvet is said to be staying in a hotel whose address is known only to the police, and no doubt to her mother and Dr. Jave.

In his impatience, Maigret almost succumbed and telephoned the Quai des Orfèvres. It was beginning to be a strain, this game of being one of the public. He could sense that the case was taking on a heightened rhythm, that the truth was probably not far off and it irked him to have to wait for news.

It had disturbed him, the evening before, at the cinema, to see the two photographs, rather as if he had witnessed some indecent exhibition.

They lunched in the neighbourhood, Madame Maigret and he, in a restaurant near the Bastille, where the regular customers were nearly all on holiday, and which was unknown to tourists, with the result that the room was three-quarters empty.

The owner came up to shake his hand.

"I thought you were on holiday, Inspector."

"I am."

“In Paris?”

“Hush!”

“You’ve returned for the Boulevard Haussmann case?”

He should never have let himself be seen in one of his usual haunts.

“We’re just passing through, my wife and I. We’re leaving again straight away.”

“What’s your view of it? Is it the young one?”

“I don’t know anything about it.”

It depended on so many things of which he hadn’t the faintest notion! Had Janvier got information which he hadn’t mentioned to the Press? It was possible, and it was that, of course, which annoyed the chief-inspector. On the one hand, he couldn’t help trying to solve the problem, and on the other, he hadn’t got all the cards in his hand.

As they were sitting down outside a café in the Place de la Bastille, a short while later, not having bothered to move out of the neighbourhood, Madame Maigret remarked:

“I wonder how they manage in London and New York.”

“What do you mean?”

“Apparently they don’t have any terraces outside cafés.”

It was true that they had been spending a large part of the week sitting outside cafés. The chief-inspector was keeping an eye out for the arrival of the papers. Two girls, still young, were walking their beat outside the door of a furnished lodging-house.

“You see, there are still some of them about.”

And she gave no sign of reaction when her husband replied:

“I should hope so!”

A young lad came in sight, a pile of newspapers under his arm, and Maigret had change ready in his hand.

With a gesture that had already become automatic, he passed one of the papers to his wife, and unfolded the other,

the one with Lassagne's article in it.

CONCARNEAU IN A FURORE  
TWO SIDES OVER EVELINE JAVE  
THE DENTIST'S DIVORCE

Lassagne's story first of all covered Gilbert Négrel's arrest, in almost the same terms as the morning dailies, only adding one detail: the doctor had taken with him a suitcase that had apparently been packed before the police arrived. Going down the stairs, Martine Chapuis had insisted on carrying this case.

It appeared that Maître Chapuis had deliberately made a spectacular announcement of his journey to Concarneau and that his set purpose had been to drag the Press along with him.

Was it to create a diversion? Or had he too really an idea at the back of his mind? Had his future son-in-law suggested it to him?

The fact remains that down in Brittany the little troupe had invaded the Hôtel de l'Amiral, in the Quai Carnot, which Maigret knew through having in the past once conducted a case there which had caused quite a stir.

Following his usual custom, Lassagne began by sketching a picture of the town, the harbour, the ramparts of the old town.

Only two days ago, it seems, there was sunshine, but we have been greeted by a storm from the north-west. The sky is low and dark. Clouds pass swiftly, almost at the level of the roof-tops, and the sea rages. Even in the harbour the breakers can be seen dashing against each other.

In the circumstances affecting the Boulevard Haussmann case also, the climate we find here is quite different from Paris. One feels that passions brood, that the inhabitants have already taken sides for or against.

And we do not mean for or against Dr. Jave or Dr. Négrel, but for or against Eveline Jave, and perhaps all the Le Guérecs.

A significant incident occurred at the station. As we were getting out of the train with Maître Chapuis, Yves



Le Guérec came out of another carriage and appeared to be waiting for our party. He was indeed waiting for us and he was no longer quite the same man we had met in the Hôtel Scribe in Paris. Looking tougher and unsociable, he suddenly barged in on us in the middle of the stream of passengers.

“Gentlemen, I don’t know what you’ve come to look for here, but I warn you that I shall sue for defamation anyone who takes the liberty of slandering my sister or my family.”

We assure our readers that this is the first time in our career we have ever been given such a warning and that naturally it will not prevent us from performing the duties of our profession.

After wandering only a couple of hours in the town we understand Yves Le Guérec’s aggressive attitude better.

The Le Guérecs belong to a prosperous middle-class set, factory-owners and ship-owners, who composed a closed group and have few contacts with the rest of the inhabitants.

We have seen the ancestral home of the Le Guérecs, which faces the sea in the Boulevard Bougainville, and we think we understand quite a lot. It is an enormous erection in the neo-Gothic style, with a tower and windows which make one think of a convent or a church. The stone is sombre. The sun can rarely penetrate into these rooms with their ceilings of bare beams.

It is here that the future Madame Jave spent her childhood and adolescence.

In fact the Le Guérecs lived in the house till their father’s death and Yves then had a modern villa built at the end of White Sands beach.

We have also seen the factory, the smell of which can be recognized more than two hundred yards away, and at which three hundred women, aged from fourteen to eighty-two, work during the season.

Why is it that the contrast in this town between employers and working class is more marked than anywhere else? Is it the weather, the sullen sky, the wind and the driving rain that have given us this impression?

We have spoken to fishermen on the wharves; we have gone into shops and into bars. We have listened. We have asked questions.

Certainly Eveline Jave is lamented everywhere and no one is glad of her death. But this is the sort of thing one hears:

“It was bound to happen one day.”

It has not always been easy to hear anything further. People round here are suspicious of strangers, and still more so of the Press. Moreover most of them rely on the Le Guérecs for their daily bread, or on the other factory- and ship-owners who make common cause with them.

However a little old lady in a grocer’s shop, with a black shawl wrapped tightly over her chest, defying the glances of the shopkeeper who tried to make her shut up, told us:

“That poor doctor couldn’t know what it was he was marrying. He came from Paris. He was on holiday. He believed what people told him. If only he had taken the trouble to make enquiries, he would have found out a good deal about the young lady. And first of all he would have been told about Monsieur Lemaire, the dentist, who was such a nice young man.”

In spite of Yves Le Guérec’s threats we must tell this story. We have also had it confirmed by a person in a position to know, who shall be nameless.

Eveline was sixteen at the time, and according to the rumour going around, it was not her first adventure. She received the attentions of a certain Dr. Alain Lemaire, a dentist practising opposite the Post Office, who had then been married for five years and had two children.

“But it wasn’t for her teeth,” said the old woman, “that she went to see him every day throughout that winter, and waited at the surgery for him to finish with his patients. I saw her with my own eyes, leaning against the wall, watching the lights on the first floor. Another time I saw them going by together in Dr. Lemaire’s car, and she was so close to him that I wondered how he was able to drive.

“Madame Lemaire caught them in circumstances that left no doubt. She is a proud woman. She began by

boxing the little baggage's ears and by throwing her out of doors. Then for at least an hour you could hear the noise of a row going on in the flat.

"She left with her children, and a few weeks later she wrote from her parents' home in Rennes demanding a divorce.

"The whole of Concarneau knew about it. The Le Guérecs knew, and were quite wild. For six months they put their daughter in a convent somewhere or other, but she finished up by coming back.

"It was the poor dentist who had to leave, because he was accused of corrupting young girls.

"And there wasn't only him. I could name you other married men, well-to-do and respectable men, she has run after. It was something too strong for her.

"They tried to marry her off but no one here would take her. A young solicitor from Rennes used to visit their house for a time. Then once he cottoned on, he never came back.

"You can imagine what a godsend it was when a doctor from Paris became infatuated with her."

Madame Maigret, beside him, must have been reading more or less the same thing, though in different words, for she was looking shocked.

"Do you believe all this?"

He chose not to reply, knowing that his wife didn't like to look certain facts in the face. After so many years of living with him, she still retained a picture of the world that she had formed in the days of her childhood. Or more correctly, she clung on to it without putting too much faith in it.

"At sixteen years old!" she sighed. "Apparently she started before that."

"Yet you saw her photograph."

Lassagne went on:

Dr. Lemaire, who alone could confirm this story, is now settled in Morocco, and his wife, who they say has married again, is living in the Midi.

We have sought out a few of Eveline Jave's childhood friends and have found three of her classmates. Two are now married with children. The third, who works in the office of a ship-owning friend of the Le Guérecs', gave us a sharp answer:

"That is all untrue. And besides it's nobody's business."

When we questioned one of the other two, her husband was present and prevented her from answering us.

"Keep out of this. You know it can lead to no good. Besides it's not the job of the Press but the Police to conduct the case."

His wife kept quiet. A pity, we thought, since she seemed to have a lot on her mind.

So only one of them gave us a frank answer, as she went on doing her housework.

"At school, and later at the Lycée, everyone knew that Eveline was ill and that she was liable to die any moment. She told us herself, and we were warned that she had to be treated kindly. She knew it as well. She used to say:

" 'I've got to get the most out of life, because I'm not sure whether I'll ever reach twenty.' "

"Our games didn't interest her. During recreation she used to stay by herself in a corner, day-dreaming. One day—she must have been fourteen— she calmly told me:

" 'I'm in love.' "

"She mentioned the name of a man well known in the town, a man of about forty, whom we used to meet almost every evening as we left the Lycée.

" 'He pays no attention to me because he takes me for a little girl, but I'll have him.' "

"She took to the habit of going out of the school last so that she could walk through the streets by herself. It was in December, if I remember rightly. It was getting dark early.

"A month or so later she said to me: ' 'It's happened.' "

"What?"

" 'What I told you.' "

"You've...?"

“ ‘Not yet quite, but almost. I’ve been to his place.’”

“He was a bachelor who used to go around, and still does, seeing what he could pick up. I didn’t believe Eveline. I told her as much too.”

“All right! You’ve only got to follow me tomorrow.”

“I did follow her. He was waiting for her at a street corner and they walked off together to a house which they entered. I saw the lights go on and then the curtains being drawn.

“ ‘Did I lie?’ she asked me the next day.”

“No.”

“ ‘Before a week is up, I’ll be a real woman.’”

“She didn’t say any more to me about it, but one evening a month later I saw her coming out of the same house.

“I know that there were others. However she became more discreet. It wasn’t her fault. She was ill, after all.”

According to Lassagne, there was the other camp as well, Eveline’s defenders, and they went so far as to introduce politics into the question.

Maître Chapuis’ arrival has had the result of raising local passions to fever-pitch. He was hardly installed in his hotel bedroom before the telephone began to ring and a series of messages, anonymous or otherwise, has followed incessantly.

There can be no doubt that if the information we have gathered and the rumours we have allowed ourselves to repeat, despite Le Guérec’s threats, should be confirmed, the Boulevard Haussmann case would appear in an entirely new light.

What Maigret would have liked was an answer to two questions: Was Eveline Jave aware of her husband’s affair with Josépha’s daughter? Was Philippe Jave aware of his wife’s relations with Dr. Négrel? Had Janvier, in his office at the Quai des Orfèvres, got the answers to these questions?

Maigret remembered another question, which he had asked himself the first day:

Why was Eveline Jave naked when she was discovered in the cupboard and why had her clothes disappeared?

It was a three-sided drama, just like the music-hall, with the difference that due to it one person had lost her life and one man was going to lose his head or at the very least his liberty.

“Do you think it’s necessary to tell all that story?”

Either nothing should be told or everything must be said.

“If what the paper says is right, she was an unfortunate girl, more to be pitied than blamed.”

He knew in advance that this would be his wife’s reaction. She went on after a pause:

“It’s not a reason for killing someone, especially not in such a mean way.”

She was right, sure enough. But who had killed her? And why? It was especially the why that intrigued him.

It would be only by getting to learn more about Eveline that one would succeed in understanding the motives of her murderer.

During the past two years at least she had been in some sort of relationship to two men, her husband on one side, Dr. Négrel on the other.

Even if one could allow that each of them had loved her at a given time, neither of them still loved her the Saturday she had died.

Philippe Jave, for reasons unknown to Maigret, though he thought he could guess at them, had gradually drifted away from her and had fallen in love with Antoinette Chauvet.

Gilbert Négrel, for his part, had become engaged to a girl who seemed to be the ideal partner for him.

Did Eveline know? Had he spoken to her of breaking off their affair?

And exactly what sort of affair was this?

The information from Concarneau now allowed some idea to be formed of it. Eveline wouldn't wait for a man to pay court to her. It was she who did the attacking.

"I'll get him!" she had declared, while still a schoolgirl, to her friend, referring to a man over forty.

She had got him.

When Négrel had started coming regularly to the Boulevard Haussmann, had she again sworn:

"I'll get him!"

Her husband, already at that time in love with Antoinette, must have forsaken her. Sometimes he had gone out on a call in the evening whilst Eveline and Négrel stayed behind alone together.

Négrel had not yet met Maître Chapuis' daughter. Studious and hard-working, his experience was almost entirely limited to passing amours.

The whole thing was plausible. He knew nothing of the past of the young wife who looked so well-behaved and seemed defenceless in the face of life.

There was something at once ironical and tragic in this situation.

Eveline, with such a furious longing to live intensely, to live fast, to absorb everything in existence, remained alone between two men, and each of them loved elsewhere.

Her husband had Antoinette—who was so like her!

Négrel had Martine Chapuis, as determined to marry him as Eveline had once been to get the forty-year-old in Concarneau.

She had nothing left but her jewels, since her child didn't seem to have taken an important place in her life and it was chiefly the nurse who looked after it.

This amassing of jewels, which she wouldn't wear, also cast a curious gleam on her character.

Was it avarice that made her collect them in this fashion, like certain women who assert that it's a form of capital which

will remain with them whatever happens?

Maigret had seen none of the characters in the drama in flesh and blood. He had grown acquainted with them only through the papers. Yet he had the impression that he was not mistaken in thinking that the jewels constituted a kind of revenge.

If he could have telephoned to the Quai des Orfèvres, he would have asked Janvier:

“At what time did she start buying herself jewels or getting herself given them?”

He was prepared to swear it was at the beginning of Dr. Jave’s liaison with Antoinette, at any rate at the time when Eveline discovered she was no longer loved.

She remained a Le Guérec in spite of all else. It was *her* money, Le Guérec money, which had allowed her husband to set himself up in the Boulevard Haussmann and to become a fashionable doctor.

Had she not bought him? What’s more, wasn’t the Le Guérec income the mainstay of the household’s resources?

He no longer loved her. He had a mistress. He was paying the rent of the room in the Rue Washington. He was keeping Josépha’s daughter, who had stopped working. To her way of thinking, wasn’t that still Le Guérec money?

Very well then, she would begin to spend money in her own turn. And, to spend it more quickly, to spend more of it, it was jewels she gave herself or extracted from her husband.

Janvier was in a position to check all this by examining the bank accounts. He could find out also whether Eveline’s share of the income from the factory was paid directly to herself or to her husband.

Their Boulevard Haussmann acquaintances had suspected nothing. No more had the doctor’s patients. He was walking on a tight-rope.

Had he the right, when faced by his wife’s expensive demands, to say:



“No!”

He loved Antoinette, consoled himself with her for the love that had gone wrong. Didn't he prefer to pay the price, in order to be left in peace?

Négrel's situation was no more enviable than his. He had not rejected Eveline's advances. She had won him over. He had become her lover.

What discovery had he in turn made that had estranged him from her?

He had met Martine and both had begun to envisage a future to be spent together.

Only, so far as one could judge, Eveline was reluctant to release him. She went to rout him out in the Rue des Saints-Pères. She had telephoned to him from Cannes. She had dashed to the airport to come and join him on the Saturday.

What was she wanting, what was she exacting from him?

She was making a pitiful figure of herself, chasing after an impossible happiness. Even after his divorce, the Concarneau dentist had left the town without paying any further attention to her. The others had taken advantage of the pleasure she could afford them, and then had hastened to put an end to the affair.

It made one think of someone who, after falling into the water in a strong current, clings vainly onto rotten floating branches.

Love was escaping her. Happiness was escaping her. Stubbornly, dogged by the thought of death, she persevered despite it all.

It had ended with a body bent double, in a cupboard.

According to the police doctor, she had first been struck a blow, or else she had been thrown against a piece of furniture or the angle of a wall. The contusion was evidence of a violent scene.

A scene of jealousy?

Philippe Jave, since the day before, had an alibi, but this very alibi was suspect since it depended on Antoinette and Josépha.

Négrel, on the other hand, had spent Saturday afternoon at the Boulevard Haussmann, and during the greater part of the time Josépha had been at hand in the flat opposite.

Had Eveline been undressed before or after her death?

If it was before, then it must be presumed that Négrel had succumbed and that the couple had gone through into the bedroom at the back of the consulting room.

Had a quarrel flared up then? Had Eveline threatened to prevent her lover's marriage? Had he hit her, and then in a panic given her an injection?

In that case, had he mistaken the ampoule or had he wittingly chosen the substance that would result in killing her?

Both versions were possible. Both were explicable. And also that he should have hidden the body in the cupboard, then tidied up the room, and at the last moment, noticing the clothes on the floor or over a chair, should have removed them to destroy them.

It was harder to imagine Jave, on arriving from Cannes, calling first on his mistress, and later finding his wife at the Boulevard Haussmann, removing her clothes to make love to her.

If it was he who had killed her, it was in different circumstances. But what would they be?

Should one believe it was the result of a cynical, almost scientific scheme? Such as that Jave, now for some time anxious to be rid of Eveline, in order to gain his freedom and her fortune at one blow, followed her to Paris, contrived an alibi for himself by calling in at the Rue Washington, then appeared at the Boulevard Haussmann after his locum had left and put his plan into operation?

One fact was certain, provided that the papers had told the full truth about the keys. According to them, there were only four keys to the flat, which opened both doors on the landing.

Josépha had one, Jave another, the concierge a third, and it was Madame Jave's key that had been entrusted to Dr. Négrel during the time he was locum.

Unless the concierge had lied, and it would be hard to understand why she should do so, someone therefore had opened the door to Eveline.

Josépha declared it was not she.

Jave claimed not to have set foot in the Boulevard Haussmann.

Négrel swore that he had not seen the young woman.

Négrel, it is true, had already two lies to answer for; both could be put down to a sort of masculine sensitiveness.

He had, in the first place, denied having had relations with Madame Jave.

He had subsequently denied that she had ever entered his rooms in the Rue des Saints-Pères.

"Let him sort it out!" Maigret suddenly grumbled, as he signed to the waiter to fetch him another beer.

"You mean Janvier?"

It was indeed Janvier he was thinking of. It was annoying him to be left in the dark, to think that at the Quai they could lay their hands on factors in the case which would enable him to see clearly.

"You think he's not handling it well?"

"Far from it. I think he's handling it admirably. It's not his fault if Comélieau wanted at all costs to have Négrel arrested."

"Is he innocent?"

"I don't at all know. In any event, it's a mistake to arrest him before being more certain. Particularly now that Noël Chapuis is going to do his best to confuse the issue. It wasn't for nothing that he had made the trip to Concarneau."

"What is he hoping for?"

“To prove that Jave had good reasons for getting rid of his wife.”

“Isn’t it true?”

“Yes. So had his client just as good reasons.”

“You’re sure you wouldn’t like to call in at your office?”

“Certain. Particularly as Janvier has moved into it. I’m glad too he only smokes cigarettes, otherwise he would probably be using my pipes.”

That sally relieved him and he laughed at himself.

“Never fear. I’m not jealous of old Janvier. It’s just a little galling. Let’s go!...”

“Where?”

“Anywhere. Along the quays, if you like, Bercy way.”

And Madame Maigret, thinking of her feet and the length of the quays, stifled a sigh.

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## VII

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Maigret had at last sat down on a bench and had stayed there for nearly half an hour without feeling the need to get up and go on.

His wife, beside him, couldn't get over seeing him so much at peace with the world and was glancing at him in surprise every now and then, continually expecting to see him pull himself together with a jerk and say:

“Come on!”

It was the Quai de Bercy, where the shade of the trees was as delicious and as restful, that afternoon, as in the square of a little country town. The bench, heaven knows why, faced away from the Seine, and the Maigrets were looking towards a strange townscape carefully guarded and surrounded by iron railings, where the houses were not proper houses but wine warehouses, and the names on the boards were familiar ones to be seen on bottles and, in larger letters, on the gables of farmhouses along the main roads.

There were streets, just as in a real town, cross-roads, open spaces and avenues, and instead of cars, there were casks of all sizes cluttering them up.

“Do you know what we call, in police jargon, a drunk who's brought in off the streets?”

“You've told me before, but I've forgotten.”

“A Bercy. For example, you ask a cycling constable if he's had a quiet night without anything happening on his beat, and he answers:

“ ‘Nothing much. Three Bercys.’ ”

He had suddenly looked at his wife with a faint smile.

“You don't think I'm daft?”

She had pretended not to understand. He was convinced none the less that she knew what he was referring to. As a

matter of fact she succeeded in producing an ingenuous air to ask:

“Why?”

“I’m on holiday. Pardon let me stay in Paris in the end, on the express condition that I should have no worries and enjoy myself. For once in a while, people can kill each other without its being any concern of mine.”

“And here you are, worrying yourself silly because of this case,” she concluded for him.

“I’m not worrying myself silly. I’ll even admit something to you: there are times I find it fun to play at being a private detective. You must have seen soldiers, at fairs, shooting at bottles with miniature rifles? Sometimes, that very same day, they’ve been furious because they’ve been made to shoot on the training ranges with real guns. You see my idea?”

It was seldom that he spoke so much of what was on his mind, and that proved that he had relaxed.

“From the start I was intrigued by this story. It still fascinates me.

“Unfortunately a time comes when I can no longer stop myself getting inside people’s skins.”

She seriously had Jave and Négrel in mind when she asked:

“Inside whose skin?”

And, laughing, he replied:

“Perhaps in the victim’s. So let’s leave Janvier to his responsibilities and think no more about it.”

He was as good as his word for quite a long while. When he rose to his feet, it was to lead Madame Maigret off, not towards the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir, but in the direction of the Quai de Charenton where Paris suddenly takes on a suburban look. He had always loved the wide unloading quays, cluttered with barrels and materials of all sorts, the grey-coloured cottages, amongst the new buildings, reminding one of bygone Paris.

“I wonder why we’ve never thought of looking for a flat on the quaysides.”

From his window he would have seen the barges clinging in brotherly fashion to one another, the bargewomen and the children with their hempen-coloured hair, the linen drying on taut ropes.

“You see that cottage being demolished? That’s where a young chap lived who came to see me one day in my office with his mother, and pinched one of my pipes.”

There were few places in Paris that did not evoke some enquiry, of varying degrees of complication or notoriety. Madame Maigret knew of them by hearsay.

She was asking:

“Wasn’t it here too you spent three days and three nights in some restaurant or other, after an unknown man had been found murdered in the Place de la Concorde?”

“A little further on. The restaurant’s been turned into a garage. It’s there where you can now see a couple of petrol pumps.”

On another occasion he had travelled the whole length of the quays on foot, from the Charenton lock as far as the Ile-Saint-Louis, on the heels of a tugboat owner whom he had eventually consigned to prison.

“Aren’t you thirsty?”

Madame Maigret was never thirsty, but she was always ready to follow his lead.

“In that bar at the street-corner, too, I spent hours watching someone.”

They entered it. There was no terrace, no one inside but a thin, blonde woman listening to the wireless as she did her sewing behind the counter.

He ordered an apéritif for himself, a fruit-juice for his wife, and they sat down at a table while the barwoman watched them closely, frowning.

She was not positive whether she recognized him. It was over three years since he had last set foot in the bar. On the yellow-painted walls were hung the sort of advertisements you see in cafés and inns in the country, and a smell of stew seeped out from the kitchen. To complete the picture, a ginger cat was purring on a straw-bottomed chair.

“Fresh water or siphon?”

“Siphon.”

She was still quite plainly intrigued, like someone trying to put a name to a face. When she had served them, she bent over a newspaper lying on the bar-top, hesitated, picked up the paper and came, slightly embarrassed, towards the chief-inspector.

“It isn’t you, is it?” she thereupon asked.

She was underlining with her finger a heading under ‘Stop Press’. It was the same paper as Maigret had in his pocket, but this was an edition that had just come off the presses.

#### HAS MAIGRET BEEN CALLED IN?

Now it was his turn to frown, whilst his wife leant against his shoulder to read it with him.

We asked our correspondent at Les Sables d’Olonne to go to the Hôtel des Roches-Noires in the town, where Chief-Inspector Maigret is supposed to be spending his holiday. We wanted to let our readers know what the famous inspector thought about one of the most disturbing cases of the last decade.

The owner of the Roches-Noires was plainly embarrassed.

“The inspector has gone out,” he said immediately.

“What time will he be back?”

“He won’t be returning today.”

“Is his wife in the hotel?”

“She’s also gone out.”

“When?”

In short, after a lot of evasion, the owner finished by admitting that Maigret had not been on the premises for



at least twenty-four hours.

Our correspondent failed to get any details, try as he might. Has Inspector Janvier, finding himself for the first time in charge of a ticklish case, appealed to his chief? And has the latter hurried off to Paris?

We telephoned him straight away. We were able to get right through to him. He declared that at no time had he had any contact with the chief-inspector and that, as far as he knew, he was still to be found in the Vendée.

We also tried to 'phone Maigret's home in the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir but we were answered by the Telephone Message Service.

It is a further little mystery to add to the more tragic mystery of the dead woman in the Boulevard Haussmann.

The woman at the bar was watching him with a questioning look.

"It is you, isn't it? You've been here before, two or three years ago. I even remember you were with a little fat fellow who bounced along as he walked."

She was referring to Lucas.

"It's me," he admitted, powerless to do anything else. "We've come to spend a few hours in Paris, my wife and I, but I'm still on holiday."

"You can't ever believe what the papers say," she concluded as she went back to her place behind the counter.

There was another item of news in the paper.

Early in the afternoon, examining magistrate Comélieau ordered Dr. Négrel to appear in his chambers for interrogation. Simply but firmly the young doctor refused to answer in the absence of his lawyer. Now Maître Chapuis, who is his future father-in-law as well as his defence counsel, is still at Concarneau, where his presence is doing a lot to excite the inhabitants. According to the latest news, he is satisfied with the results of his stay by the sea in Brittany, and will be catching tonight's train for Paris.

Has he been in contact by 'phone with his daughter? Has she been acting on her own initiative? The fact remains that she appeared without being summoned at Police Headquarters and asked to speak to Inspector Janvier.

The Inspector, more talkative than he was at the start of the case, has revealed the purpose of the young girl's visit.

She wanted to tell him that she was aware of the relationship between Négrel and Eveline Jave and that she attached no importance to it.

"Gilbert," she said emphatically, "was sorry for her. For the last two years sh'e had literally been throwing herself into his arms. He wasn't in love with her. He saw her as seldom as possible. He confided in me that since we have known each other, he has seen her again three or four times and that she followed him to his flat. Jave, who knew his wife well, must have been aware of it and I'm sure that he wasn't jealous of her."

Since the girl's departure there has been considerable activity at the Quai des Orfèvres, where developments seem to be expected very soon. At the time these words are being written, two inspectors, Lapointe and Neveu have just left for an unknown destination.

In Maigret's office, occupied by Inspector Janvier since his chief has been on holiday, the phone rings endlessly.

That put an end to relaxation. A few minutes earlier Maigret had been strolling peacefully along the quayside with his wife, telling her stories of old cases.

Now his face had grown heavy again and he no longer seemed to be seeing the yellow walls decorated with colour-prints.

"Do you suppose," his wife asked, "they'll come and spy on us at the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir?"

It wasn't that which he was thinking of at the moment, and he gave a start; it required a few seconds for the words he had just heard, as if through a fog, to take on a meaning.

"Possibly. Yes, probably."

Lassagne, still at Concarneau, was bound to be keeping in continual touch with his paper and he would certainly send some young reporter to mount guard in front of Maigret's flat.

"I'll have the same again, madame."

"Have you read it?"

"Yes. Thank you."

He was somewhere far away from the little bar. His wife knew this frame of mind well, as did his colleagues. At the Quai des Orfèvres, when it came over him, people would walk on tip-toe and speak in low voices, for at such times he was capable of flying into a rage as violent as it would be brief, which he would afterwards be the first to regret.

Madame Maigret pushed caution so far as not to look his way and was pretending to skim over the woman's page of the paper, though never ceasing to be alert for her husband's reactions.

He himself would probably not have been able to say what he was thinking about. Perhaps because he wasn't thinking? For it wasn't a question of reasoning. It was rather as if the three characters in the drama had come to life inside him, and even the supers such as Josépha, Antoinette, the young fiancée and Mademoiselle Jusserand, were no longer mere entities but were becoming human beings.

Alas, they were still incomplete, sketchy humans. They remained in a half-light, from which the chief-inspector was striving to drag them with an almost painful effort.

He could feel the truth quite close at hand and he was powerless to grasp it.

Of the two men, one was guilty, the other innocent. Sometimes his lips half-opened as if to pronounce a name and then, after a hesitation, he would forego it.

There was not just, as in the majority of cases, a single possible solution. There were at least two of them.

Yet only one was the right one, only one was the human truth. He had not to discover it by a piece of fierce reasoning,

by a logical reconstruction of the facts, but to *feel* it.

Eveline, on the Friday, had telephoned to Négrel, who was her more or less consenting lover.

Had she informed him that she was going to catch the plane for Paris the following morning?

Or was it, on the contrary, because of the young doctor's coldness that she had suddenly decided on making this journey?

She had hardly departed, on Saturday morning, before Jave was dashing to the airport and, for want of a plane to Paris, catching the London plane so as to avoid waiting.

"Do you believe that?" he suddenly asked, talking to himself rather than to Madame Maigret.

"What?"

"That it was a coincidence. Eveline Jave is in love with Négrel and, after a few weeks' separation, she can hold out no longer and dashes off to Paris. Her husband's in love with Antoinette Chauvet and the very same day feels the urgent need to make the trip to take her in his arms."

Madame Maigret pondered.

"Wasn't he taking advantage of his wife's absence?"

Maigret didn't feel that was it. He had no liking for sheer chance.

"Once in Paris, where he hadn't got his car, he must have taken at least two taxis, one to go from the Boulevard des Capucines, where the airport bus dropped him, to the Rue Washington, and another to go to the station in the evening. Janvier, as I know him, is bound to have had all taxi-drivers questioned."

"You think that can yield something?"

"We've often got results that way, but it takes time."

After a fairly long silence, during which he took a drink from his glass and lit a fresh pipe, he sighed:

“She was naked...”

The image of Eveline, naked, bent double in the cupboard, continually reverted to his mind.

He was surprised to find his wife for once overcoming her delicacy, concerning which he so often teased her.

“In view of what she came to the Boulevard Haussmann for, that was natural, wasn’t it?”

He wanted to reply:

“*No.*”

It didn’t fit in. Was it on account of Négrel’s character that this rendering of the events seemed to him false? The young doctor was acting for a colleague in one of the most luxurious surgeries in Paris. He had a certain number of appointments with patients. Five had been mentioned. Others might have arrived at any moment, since it was during consulting-hours. Lastly, Josépha was across the way.

Even if Eveline had undressed in the bedroom, even if he had killed her, intentionally or not, wasn’t Négrel just the sort of man to have put her clothes back on again?

Not necessarily to divert suspicion. Rather by a kind of reflex.

The wireless was still playing away to itself without Maigret hearing it and he was continuing, with his eyes half-closed, to pick up one by one the events of that Saturday afternoon.

Josépha, according to her own story, had left the Boulevard Haussmann about six o’clock to go to her daughter’s, where she had found Dr. Jave.

At her first interrogation, she had lied, stating that she had not seen her employer since his departure for Cannes. That could be explained by her desire not to compromise her daughter. It admitted of other explanations too.

It suddenly seemed to him that a slight gleam was beginning to pierce the fog, but it was still so uncertain that he couldn’t grasp it. He was thinking of the landing, with its two doors... What did that landing...?

Madame Maigret at that moment laid her hand on his wrist:  
“Listen!”

He hadn’t realized that the wireless had stopped playing music and that someone was speaking.

“Latest afternoon news. It definitely appears that the Boulevard Haussmann case is entering on its final phase...”

It was a monotonous voice. The announcer at the microphone was most likely reading from a text that had just been handed to him and from time to time he slipped up on various syllables.

At three o’clock this afternoon two inspectors from Police Headquarters appeared at the home of Dr. Jave in the Boulevard Haussmann, and a few minutes later they left the building with the doctor.

The latter seemed to have grown thinner in the last few days and he crossed the pavement without looking at the reporters who were trying to drag a word from him.

At just about the same time another inspector was taking by taxi to the Quai des Orfèvres a person who has so far been a mystery, since it has been impossible to meet her in the course of the last few days. We refer to Mlle. Antoinette Chauvet, the doctor’s mistress.

Not so downcast as Jave, she crossed the courtyard of Police Headquarters behind the inspector, climbed the steps of the big staircase and was immediately brought into the presence of Inspector Janvier.

Jave was due to arrive a few minutes later. The same door opened to admit him and was at once closed again.

The interrogation of the doctor and Antoinette Chauvet has lasted for more than two hours already and there is no reason to presume it will end soon. On the contrary one has the impression from the atmosphere in the passages and offices, where detectives are busily going in and out, that Inspector Janvier has decided to see the case through to its conclusion.

Only one new point has come to our notice. In the bedroom situated behind the consulting-rooms in the

Boulevard Haussmann, the police are said to have found a button which appears to have been torn from Gilbert Négrel's jacket.

And now we pass on to the political news of the last twelve hours which...

The woman at the bar turned the knob.

"I suppose you're not interested in any more?"

Maigret looked at her as if he hadn't heard. He had just felt another tightening of his heart, for the words spoken by the announcer rang with a different intensity for him than for the common run of listeners.

Just as one says a soldier sniffs the smell of gunshot, he too could sense something brewing, up there, in his own office. That special feverishness of which the wireless spoke, he knew it well, through having set it in motion hundreds of times himself.

A case marks time, or seems to mark time, for days, sometimes for weeks. And suddenly, at the moment one least expects it, a click occurs, perhaps induced by an anonymous telephone call, or by some apparently insignificant discovery.

"Go and fetch Jave to me..."

He imagined he could see Janvier, slightly pale, like an actor seized by stage-fright before his entrance, pacing his office as he waited for Antoinette and the doctor.

Why had he summoned them together? What new questions was he going to put to them?

Maigret, on going on holiday, hadn't even brought all his pipes away with him. Four or five of them must still have been there, beside his blotter, by the lamp with the green shade. There was half a bottle of cognac too in the cupboard where he usually washed his hands in the enamel basin and where one of his old jackets was hanging.

How would Janvier manage? He was twenty years younger than the chief-inspector, but he had followed him in most of his enquiries and knew his methods better than anyone.

Didn't he lack a little in breadth of shoulder for the rôle he was engaged in playing? What, in the language of the cinema, is called "presence"? Jave was older than he, a solid man, who had seen a lot and lived a lot.

"Are we off?" Madame Maigret asked as he rose to his feet and moved towards the counter to pay for the drinks.

"Yes."

This time he didn't oblige her to walk. At the edge of the pavement, he looked out for a taxi, and eventually there was one which drew up.

"To the corner of the Boulevard Richard-Lenoir and the Boulevard Voltaire."

Once inside on the seat, he explained:

"In case journalists should be mounting guard outside the house."

"You mean I'm to go in alone."

He batted his eyelids affirmatively and she put no further questions to him.

"Go in as if nothing was up. If any reporters question you, tell them that we've come to spend a few hours in Paris and that I'm somewhere out in town. Get the dinner ready, and in the event of my not being back by eight o'clock, have your meal without me."

Just as when he was at work at the Quai des Orfèvres and was on a case. Not only would he then occasionally not return home to dinner, but she would sometimes not see him till the small hours of the morning.

"I'm at the Quai," he would then announce by telephone. "I don't know when I'll be finished."

She, too, had heard the radio. She could guess what was going on down there. She was wondering if her husband was going to infringe the promise he had made himself—and made to Pardon—not to set foot in Headquarters during his holidays.



She knew that he longed to do so. She could see he was gloomy, tormented. As the taxi was pulling up, she murmured:

“Why don’t you go over there, after all?”

He shook his head, waited till she was some distance away before saying to the driver:

“Boulevard Saint-Michel. In front of the fountain.”

Maybe it was childish, but he felt the need to draw near to the field of battle. It’s not unknown for curious onlookers to post themselves for hours outside a house where a crime has been committed, even when there is nothing to see.

All he himself could see was the massive entrance to Police Headquarters with a constable on duty, the yard with its little black cars and the windows, one of which belonged to his own office.

On the quayside two photographers were waiting with their cameras, and there were bound to be others, as well as reporters, in the vast first-floor corridor.

Had Janvier really uncovered some new fact? Was he acting off his own bat, or under the orders of the irascible Judge Comélieu?

Gilbert Négrel, now, was alone in one of the cells looking onto the second, inner courtyard.

There was no more mention of Eveline’s funeral, as if everyone, including her brother, had suddenly lost interest in her.

Maigret reached the Quai des Grands-Augustins, right opposite the Palais de Justice, hesitated a second before entering a little Norman bar, slightly below street-level, so that it was necessary to go down two steps. It was always cool in there, even in the fiercest heat-wave, and in no other bistro in Paris was the smell of calvados so strong.

“So, the newspaper’s right...”

The bar-owner with carbuncled cheeks had known him for years and the final edition of the paper was spread out in front of him.

“What can I offer you? Not too late for a little calva?”

He authoritatively filled two glasses. There was only one customer, in a corner, reading some travel agency brochures, and the waitress was laying the places on six tables covered with red-checked cloths.

“What sort of weather are you having, at Les Sables? We’ve had some splendid days here, apart from one storm. Your very good health!”

Maigret clinked glasses with him and drank up.

“I certainly suspected, right from the start, that they’d get you to come back. I even said as much to my wife:

“ ‘Take this case, there’s only Inspector Maigret can sort it out.’

“For why? If you want my opinion, they’re all lying. Speak for yourself. Don’t you get that impression?”

“If I were Inspector Janvier—by the bye, it’s quite a while since he came in for a drink!—if I were he, I say, I’d have put the two of them face to face, doctors though they be, and I’d have said to them:

“ ‘Sort it out between yourselves...’ ”

Maigret could not withhold a smile, but his gaze, through the glass front, remained fixed on the open window of his office. At one time, he caught sight of the profile of a man walking up and down and he recognized Janvier’s silhouette. He was even able, despite the distance, to make out the smoke from his cigarette in the chiaroscuro.

The business of the button nettled the chief-inspector, struck him like a false note. It gave one to suppose that there had been a struggle between Eveline and Dr. Négrel. From there it was only a step to believing that it was the latter who had hit the young woman, or who had thrown her against some part of the furniture.

And that would lead on to an explanation for the injection of digitalis even for the mistake over the drug.

“She was naked...” he murmured unconsciously.

“I beg your pardon?”

“Nothing. I’m just wondering...”

He was retrieving the little gleam he had caught sight of a while earlier on the Quai de Charenton. There was a snag somewhere. One of the secondary characters kept recurring obstinately to his memory, one of those who had been least mentioned.

It was Claire Jusserand, the nurse whom Dr. Jave had taken on from a Paris clinic, where she had been a sister, to look after his child.

If one was to believe the newspapers, she had begun by refusing to speak, by shutting herself up in the Villa Marie-Thérèse, where she was only to be seen from a distance in the garden with little Michèle.

He was recalling to mind a guileless phrase he had read somewhere, in some article of Lassagne’s or other.

She is in her fifties and seems to nurse a hatred for all men...

He knew that sort of old. The majority of them, moreover, hate not only men but women, and live as though shut in on themselves.

But they do not necessarily hate *all* men. Sometimes they devote to one man alone a secret worship which becomes their sole reason for living.

Had she known Jave for some long time? In view of her profession, it was possible, nay, even probable, since the doctor would have patients in most of the clinics in Paris.

Maigret was trying to picture her in the Boulevard Haussmann and in the Villa Marie-Thérèse. She had never known love, or, if she had known it, then it had been an unhappy love affair.

What were her relations with Eveline, whom she saw amassing jewels, and who had not only a husband but a lover?

The sun was setting and the last tug-boats, with their string of barges, were hurrying towards some port on the Seine.

A fisherman was dismantling his rod and the booksellers' boxes were already closed.

"Dare I ask if you'll have dinner here? I presume you're too busy?"

"I've got nothing to do. I'm on holiday."

He said this with a certain sharpness.

"What have you got on the menu?"

It was written in chalk on a slate. There was Normandy sole and roast veal.

"I'll dine here."

The patron was wearing a sly look, since he didn't believe a word of what the chief-inspector had told him about his holidays. For him, as for so many others, what is printed in the newspapers is gospel truth.

"Maria! Will you reserve the table near the window for the inspector."

And he gave a wink in his direction, convinced that Maigret was only on his premises in order to observe heaven knows what.

"You can fill the glasses... My round, this time..."

It was now nearly four hours that Jave and Antoinette had been in Maigret's office, confronted by an increasingly tense Janvier.

The lamp with the green shade lit up. Someone went to close the window. Half an hour later, when Maigret was in the middle of dinner, he caught sight of the waiter from the Brasserie Dauphine with a tray covered with a napkin.

That was all in keeping too. Glasses of beer and sandwiches meant that the interrogation was going to be protracted late into the evening.

There was so little expectation of any immediate results that three or four reporters deserted the Quai des Orfèvres and made their way to the restaurant in the Place Dauphine. They

would never have left if they hadn't been assured that they had time to go and have dinner.

Five customers had taken their seats around the restaurant tables: two men together on a bench, discussing carburettors, who were probably commercial travellers ; a foreign couple, who had some difficulty in making themselves understood; and lastly a young fair-haired girl who, on entering, had looked in the chief-inspector's direction with a frown on her face.

He had not recognized her straight away, although the papers had published her photograph. It was Martine Chapuis, wearing a printed cotton frock, who turned out to be plumper and softer than she appeared in her pictures.

She too had chosen a seat by the glass front and she never took her eyes off the Quai des Orfèvres except to shoot the odd glance at the chief-inspector.

He found he liked her at first sight. She had a frank face, a well-modelled mouth, was much more feminine than one would have expected of someone who heaped up academic honours.

He almost wanted to go and speak to her and she had several times the same idea, for when their looks crossed, a slight smile would rise to her lips.

She was aware, from the papers and the wireless, of what was happening over the way. From her father, she was acquainted with the habits of the police, and she too was waiting for a dénouement.

She wanted to be in the front seats. Wasn't she one of the parties principally concerned?

"A real woman," he thought, as they were serving him the cheese.

Suddenly, he rose to his feet, went through into the kitchen, where the owner, who had put on his white chef's cap, was busily engaged at the stove.

"Can I telephone to Cannes?"

“You know the box. You need only ask how much it is.”

Martine Chapuis, who was following him with her eyes, saw him go through the glass-paned door and unhook the receiver.

“I want the Villa Marie-Thérèse, at Cannes, mademoiselle. It’s a personal call for Mademoiselle Jusserand.”

“There’ll be a few minutes’ delay.”

He returned to his seat and had hardly finished his camembert before the bell began to ring.

It was his turn to have stage-fright, for he was letting himself in for an experience that was unfamiliar to him, one which he would not have permitted himself had he been in Janvier’s place in his office.

The line, just as he expected and as he hoped, was bad. He could hear at the other end, a voice repeating impatiently:

“Hallo... Hallo... This is the Villa Marie-Thérèse... Who is that?”

The papers had reported that the cook was a country-woman. But the person answering the phone had no accent, which left him to assume it was Mademoiselle Jusserand.

He disguised his voice as best he might.

“Hallo! Claire?”

He was taking risks, not knowing how Dr. Jave would address the nurse.

“Yes, it’s me. Who’s calling?”

He was forced to run another risk.

“It’s Monsieur.”

“The connection’s bad,” she said. “I can scarcely hear you. The baby’s crying in the next room.”

All was going well. He had used the requisite words. It only remained for him to put his question.

“Tell me, Claire, when the police questioned you about the telephone call Madame made on Friday, did you answer that

you'd spoken to me about it?"

He waited, with beating heart, and through the glass pane, he could see Martine Chapuis staring hard at him.

"Certainly not," came the voice at the other end of the line.

It was almost as if the nurse was shocked, that she should have been mistrusted.

"Thank you very much. That's all."

He hastily hung up, forgot to ask the exchange what he owed, only thought of it once he was seated back in his place at the table.

Opposite him, the other side of the narrow room, the girl was watching him anxiously and it was all he could do not to smile at her.

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## VIII



The two commercial travellers were the first to leave. As the *patron* had come across to tell Maigret towards the end of the meal, his regular customers were in the country or at the seaside, and with tourists, "you never can tell." One day it would be full, for no reason, "because they follow each other like sheep," another day, as in the present case, there were only "a couple of strays", who, after having sent back several dishes they didn't like, were now disputing the bill franc by franc.

Martine Chapuis had finished her coffee before Maigret and had opened her bag to touch up her lipstick. She had next looked towards the end of the room where the *patron* was standing, with the waitress, as if to ask for her bill.

Maigret, who was smoking his pipe in little puffs, leaning back against the bench, watched her and wondered if she would dare... He sometimes enjoyed trying like this to predict what people were going to do and he always experienced a certain satisfaction when he had not been mistaken.

Would she raise her hand to call the waitress over? She began to do so, then glanced across at the chief-inspector. Good! She was changing her mind, looking harder at Maigret, opening her eyes a little wider as if to pose a question.

In his turn, he then batted his eyelids, with a kind of fatherly air.

They understood each other. Rather awkwardly, she was getting up, coming across to the policeman's table, and he was rising to his feet to let her sit down.

So it was he who summoned the waitress, but not for the bill.

"Two calvados, my dear. From the *patron's* bottle."

And to Martine, who had been surprised:

"You must be needing it. It's a long business, isn't it?"

"What I don't understand," she admitted, "is why you aren't over there. I read what the paper said and heard the wireless."

"I am really and truly on holiday."

"In Paris?"

"Sh! It's a secret. We decided, my wife and I, to spend our holiday in Paris so as to get more peace and quiet, and Janvier himself doesn't know about it. Therefore, as you see, I'm in hiding."

"All the same, you're concerned in the case?"

"As an amateur, like everyone else. I too have read the papers, and a little while ago, by chance, in a bar I heard the news over the radio."

"Do you think Inspector Janvier is capable of understanding?"

"Understanding what?"

"That Gilbert didn't kill that woman."

The restaurant was by now as calm as an aquarium. The *patron* and his wife, a tiny little, round woman, as red in the



face as her husband, were eating at the table nearest the kitchen, and the waitress was serving them.

On the other quay, opposite, they had seen the journalists returning; they must have drowned their hurried dinner with a liberal amount to drink, for even at a distance they were plainly high-spirited.

Almost all the lights in Headquarters had gone out. On the first floor, there were only left those in Maigret's office and in the inspectors' room next door to it.

The chief-inspector was taking his time and had recovered his bonhomous attitude.

"So you are sure, are you, that he's innocent?"

She blushed, and that made him pleased, for he didn't like women who have outgrown being able to blush.

"Certainly."

"Because you love him?"

"Because I know he's incapable of committing a shameful act, let alone a crime."

"Have you thought so from the very first day?"

She looked away and he pressed on:

"Admit you've had your doubts."

"I said to myself at the start that it was possibly an accident."

"And now?"

"I'm convinced it's not him."

"Why?"

Since the beginning of the meal he had had the intuition that she wanted to speak to him and that she really had something to say to him, something difficult. From the way she was behaving with him, he thought he could understand how she was on such friendly, confiding terms with her father. It was rather as if, in the latter's absence, she had chosen the chief-inspector to replace him.

Instead of replying, she put a question of her own.

“Were you telephoning to Concarneau just now?”

“No.”

“Oh!”

She seemed disappointed to have been mistaken.

“I wonder what they’re doing, opposite, all these hours.”

“Best not to get impatient; it may go on all night.”

“Do you think they’ll interrogate Gilbert too?”

“It’s possible, but unlikely. Négrel, you see, is already in the hands of the examining magistrate, and can’t be questioned any further except in the presence of his lawyer.”

“Papa’s not arriving till tomorrow morning.”

“I know. You still haven’t told me why you are practically certain that it isn’t your fiancé who killed Madame Jave.”

She lit a cigarette, rather nervously.

“Do you mind?”

“Please do.”

“It’s hard to explain. You haven’t ever seen Gilbert?”

“No. Still, I think I have a fairly accurate idea of his character.”

“And also of how he behaves towards a woman?”

He looked at her in surprise, intrigued.

“I can’t pretend to be any better than I am, can I? You have realized, from my statements, that we haven’t waited to get married before being alone together. It made mother furious, because of what people will say, but father doesn’t hold it against me. When the body of this woman was discovered, it was completely naked...”

Maigret’s eyes grew narrower and keener, for she was touching on a point which had intrigued him from the start.

“I don’t know how to put it... It’s rather personal... With some men, that might be possible... Do you see what I mean?”

“Not yet quite.”

She drank up half her glass to give herself courage.

“If anything had taken place between them that Saturday, and if Madame Jave had been undressed, Gilbert would have been undressed too.”

He suddenly felt that this was true. Some men would have been able to act otherwise, in a more carefree manner. Not so a boy like Négrel, who would have wished to be on some sort of equal terms with his companion.

“What is there to prove he wasn’t?”

It was scarcely a question he was putting, since he knew the answer in advance.

“You forget that that was happening during consulting hours and Josépha might at any moment have shown a patient in. Can you imagine a doctor suddenly appearing naked in his surgery?”

She herself succeeded in laughing. Then she resumed her serious expression, glanced across to the other side of the Seine.

“I swear, inspector, that it’s the truth. I know Gilbert. However odd it may seem, he’s shy, and terribly sensitive where women are concerned.”

“I believe you.”

“Then you also believe that he didn’t kill her?”

He preferred not to reply and glanced in turn at the window of his office, where Inspector Janvier was living what might without exaggeration be called the big night of his life. The reporters, the photographers were waiting in the corridor. The newspapers and the radio had announced that the decisive interrogation had begun.

Before very long, either the Boulevard Haussmann case would be solved and Janvier would have won the day, or else,

when the next morning came, the public would be left with a mixed feeling of disappointment and resentment. And not only the public. Comélieau was sure to be telephoning every half-hour, from his residence, so as to be kept in touch.

“Excuse me a moment, my dear.”

He was surprised he had addressed her like that: it was because he liked her a lot. If he had had a daughter, he wouldn't have been sorry, come to that, if she were like her. Madame Maigret would have reacted like Martine's mamma, but he himself would surely have reacted like Chapuis.

He went down to the end of the room.

“Have you any paper, without a heading on it, and an envelope?”

“We've only got unheaded writing-paper. Use the blotter, behind the counter. There's a bottle of ink and a pen there as well.”

“How long have you been employing the little boy I saw just now, washing up in the kitchen?”

“His mother came and brought him to us three weeks ago. He goes back to the lycée in October. They're poor folk, and he does his best to earn a little money during the holidays.”

“Janvier hasn't been here during the last three weeks?”

“No, I haven't seen him. When they want a drink, they're more likely to go to the Brasserie Dauphine; it's not so far.”

As Maigret knew better than anyone.

“Don't let the lad go before I give him an errand to run.”

“He's still got to tidy up the kitchen which'll take him a while.”

Maigret did not return to his table but sat down at another table some way from Martine Chapuis. On the envelope, he wrote:

FOR THE ATTENTION OF INSPECTOR JANVIER  
VERY URGENT

The girl could see clearly, from her place, that he was printing out block letters and she failed to understand. The text on the sheet was short.

JAVE LEARNED FROM THE NURSE, ON FRIDAY NIGHT,

THAT HIS WIFE WAS COMING TO PARIS

He passed through into the kitchen.

“What’s your name?” he asked the boy with the tousled mop of hair, who was stacking dishes.

“Ernest, chief-inspector.”

“Who told you who I was?”

“Nobody. I recognized you from your photos.”

“Would you like to do a job for me. You don’t let yourself be scared easily?”

“Of you, I might be. But not of anyone else.”

“Will you run across opposite, to Headquarters. You know it?”

“The big gate where there’s always a policeman on duty?”

“Yes. Will you give the policeman this envelope and tell him that it must be taken straight away to Inspector Janvier.”

“I follow.”

“Just a second. That’s not all. It’s possible the policeman may ask you to take it upstairs yourself.”

“Shall I do it?”

“Yes. On the first floor, there’ll be a lot of people. Behind a desk, you’ll see an old doorman wearing a chain round his neck.”

“I know what you mean. They have them in banks.”

“Tell him the same thing. If there’s an inspector around about, he may ask you some questions. So remember this: you were crossing the Pont Saint-Michel when a gentleman gave

you five hundred francs to take a letter to Police Headquarters.”

“I follow.”

“It was a short, thin man...”

The little boy, thinking it great fun, was in a hurry to be off.

“Short and thin, fairly old...”

“Yes, Monsieur Maigret.”

“That’s all. You’d better not come back here tonight, as they might follow you.”

“Are you playing a joke on them?”

Maigret merely smiled and returned to his seat next to the girl.

“It may work or it may not.”

“What have you been doing?”

“I’ve been behaving just like the typical reader, the sort who signs letters: ‘Someone who knows’.”

She saw Ernest leave with the letter after talking in a low voice to the *patron*, and her eyes followed him over the Pont Saint-Michel where he was almost running more than walking.

“Was it a result of what I told you?”

“No.”

“A result of your telephone call?”

“Yes.”

The *patron* and his wife had finished dinner. Their table had been cleared.

“You don’t think they’re waiting for us to leave to shut up?”

“Certainly.”

“They must have to get up early.”

“The nuisance is that afterwards we haven’t anywhere to go.”

There wasn't another café or another bar open opposite Headquarters. The boy, on the other quayside, was in conversation with the policeman on duty. Soon afterwards he was disappearing under the arch.

"I suspected they would make him go up. The constable's not allowed to leave his post. Provided..."

Things were certainly bound to be happening, for Ernest reappeared three or four minutes later and made off this time towards the Pont-Neuf.

Janvier had received the anonymous message. Even if he accorded it only a degree of credence, he couldn't fail to put at least one question to Dr. Jave on the subject.

"You don't seem impatient," Martine commented, as he slumped down on the bench, with a vague look.

Because she didn't know him. It was the first time that he was living through this stage of a case anywhere else than in his office, and he had the same sensation as when it was he who was putting the questions.

He had subjected people of every type to hundreds of interrogations. Most of them lasted several hours. Some were protracted, in the cigarette or pipe smoke, through part of the night, and the inspectors were often obliged to take relays.

People at the Quai still cited one twenty-seven-hour interrogation, at the end of which Maigret was as exhausted as the man who had eventually confessed.

Yet every time, after all those years, the same phenomenon would recur.

So long as the suspect before him was struggling, refusing to answer, or lying, it was to some extent an evenly matched contest, on an almost technical level. Questions would follow questions, as unexpected as possible, whilst the chief-inspector's eyes remained alert to the slightest quiver on the part of his interlocutor.

Almost always, sooner or later, a moment would come when resistance snapped suddenly and the policeman had nothing but a man at the end of his tether before him. For, at

that moment, he would become a man again, a man who had stolen, or killed, but a man for all that, a man who was going to pay, who knew it, a man for whom this minute marked the cleavage with his past and his fellows.

Like an animal about to be done to death—and Maigret had never been able to kill an animal, even a harmful one—he nearly always stared at the man who had hounded him to a confession with a look of astonishment that held a reproach.

“That’s just how it happened...” he would mumble, at his last gasp.

He would be in a hurry for just one thing: to sign his statement, sign anything and go to sleep.

How many times had Maigret, thereupon, taken the bottle of cognac from the cupboard, not merely to offer a drink to his victim, but to pour himself a large glass?

He had done his job as a policeman. He didn’t judge. It was not for him, but for others, later, to pass judgment, and he preferred it that way.

How far had they got, up there, behind the lighted windows of Maigret’s office? Had Jave’s resistance begun to yield and was Janvier pressing in to the kill?

The girl, facing the chief-inspector, seemed to be following his thoughts.

“It’s funny,” she was murmuring in a dead voice. “I should never have believed Dr. Jave capable of that either. He looks so little like a murderer!”

Maigret said nothing. What good would it do to explain to her that in all his career, apart from a few professionals, he had never come across a murderer who looked like a criminal?

“What do I owe you, *patron*?”

“Both dinners?”

“I insist on paying for my own,” Martine Ghapuis protested.

He didn’t argue.

“The calvados are on me.”



“If you like.”

They went out together and they had not reached the Pont Saint-Michel before the *Patron* was putting up the shutters.

“Are you going over there?”

“No. I’m waiting.”

The Orfèvres quayside was, fortunately, badly lit. By remaining on the pavement running beside the Seine, they were in shadow and the policeman on duty couldn’t recognize them.

“Do you think he’ll confess?”

Maigret merely shrugged his shoulders. He wasn’t God Almighty. He had done his best. The rest was up to Janvier.

They were walking in silence, and from a distance, they would probably have been taken for lovers, or rather for a couple who have just come out for a breath of night air along the quays before going to bed.

“I’m almost sorry,” the chief-inspector suddenly growled, “that it isn’t Négrel.”

She started, flung him a suddenly fierce look.

“What do you mean?”

“Don’t get upset. I haven’t anything against your Gilbert, far from it. But if it had been he, there might have been some question of an accident. You understand?”

“I think I’m beginning to understand.”

“In the first place, your fiancé had no sufficient reason for killing. Particularly as you knew about his affair with Eveline Jave. You did know about it, didn’t you?”

“Yes.”

He stopped walking, asked without looking at her:

“Why are you lying?”

“I’m not lying. That’s to say...”

“Go on.”

“I knew, because he had confessed it to me, that he had had relations with her. She had practically forced him to it. I knew too that she continued to pursue him...”

“But not that she was due to come up from Cannes on Saturday to see him?”

“No.”

“Nor that she had been to his place since he’s known you?”

“No. You see I’m being frank. It’s out of sensitiveness that he hasn’t talked to me about it. Does it make any difference?”

He took a while to reflect.

“Not any longer. Anyhow, the motive would not have been a sufficient one. And, as I said to you just now, in Négrel’s case it might have been an accident, a mistake over the ampoule.”

“Do you still think that’s possible?”

“I’m afraid not.”

“Why?”

“Because Jave knew, from Friday night, that his wife would be coming to Paris by plane on the Saturday. He didn’t come here, himself, to see Antoinette. He didn’t just miss the plane Eveline had taken a seat on. He knowingly caught the London plane and I’m convinced that he studied the flight time-table in advance.”

The windows, up above, were still lit. Two or three times a silhouette was seen going past, Janvier no doubt, too excited to remain seated at Maigret’s desk.

“Do you claim Dr. Jave had sufficient reason?”

“Isn’t what we’ve learnt about Eveline a sufficient reason?”

“For killing her?”

He shrugged his shoulders once again.

“What I don’t like,” he admitted reluctantly, “is the fact that he undressed her.”

“What do you mean?”

“It suggests that he wanted suspicion to fall on someone else.”

“On Gilbert!”

“Yes. He thought he was acting like an intelligent man. But, strange though it may seem, it’s always the intelligent men who get themselves caught. Certain beastly crimes, committed by some wretched tramp or other, or by a lunatic, remain unpunished. An intellectual’s crime, never. They try to foresee everything, to put the slightest chances on their side. They attempt refinements. And it’s their refinements, the one detail ‘too many’, that gets them caught in the end.

“I am positive that Jave was in the flat opposite while his wife was with your fiancée.

“What she told Négrel, I don’t know, and in view of his character, I doubt that he’ll ever repeat it to you.”

“I’m sure he won’t.”

“I shouldn’t be surprised if she didn’t inform him of her decision to get a divorce, or even to go and live with him straight away.”

“You think she loved him.”

“She had to have at least one man of her own. She tried so hard! From the age of fourteen, she tried in vain...”

“Was she an unhappy woman?”

“I couldn’t say. She clung on to him. She tore a button off his coat.”

“I don’t like picturing that scene.”

“Neither do I. Négrel chose to be gone. Notice how he left at half-past five, whereas consulting hours are from two till six. Jave had only, once the coast was clear, to cross the landing.”

“Don’t go on!”

“I don’t want to go into details. I only emphasize the fact that he afterwards undressed her and disposed of her clothes.”

“I understand. Please don’t say any more. What if they shouldn’t understand, those people, up there?”

She tossed her head towards the lighted windows.

“Why don’t you go in there, Inspector? It would be all over at once. I’m sure that you...”

It was past midnight. The quayside was deserted, the Pont Saint-Michel likewise. They could hear distant sounds and Maigret recognized the sound of numerous footsteps in the Headquarters yard.

Martine stopped and automatically grasped his arm.

“What is it?”

He was straining his ears, following the direction of the footsteps. He relaxed, at last.

“Someone has taken him off to the cells.”

“You’re sure?”

“I can recognize the creaking of the gate.”

“Jave?”

“I suppose so.”

At the same time, one of the windows went dark, that of the Duty Room.

“Come this way.”

He led her off to a darker patch of shadow, and sure enough, a few seconds later, he saw Santoni, Lapointe and Bonfils emerge. Lapointe and Santoni set off in the direction of the Pont Saint-Michel, Bonfils towards the Pont-Neuf.

*“See you tomorrow.”*

*“Good night.”*

“It’s all over,” Maigret murmured.

“Are you sure?”

“Janvier’s busy giving the story to the journalists. We’ll see them coming out any moment now.”

“And the young woman, Antoinette.”

“They’ll keep her and there’s quite a chance she’ll be charged with complicity, since she provided the doctor with an alibi.”

“Her mother too?”

“Probably.”

“In your opinion, did they know?”

“Look here, my dear, it’s no concern of mine; I’m on holiday. And even if I were in Janvier’s place, I wouldn’t allow myself to make up my mind; that’s for the jury to do.”

“Aren’t they going to release Gilbert?”

“Not before tomorrow morning, because only the examining magistrate is empowered to sign the necessary papers.”

“Will he know already?”

“He must have heard them giving him a neighbour and I’d bet he recognized the voices. What’s the matter with you?”

She was crying, all of a sudden, without knowing why.

“I haven’t even got a handkerchief...” she stammered. “It’s stupid! What time, tomorrow morning?”

“Certainly not before nine.”

He had handed her his own handkerchief and he was still keeping an eye on the gate of Headquarters.

It wasn’t long before a car emerged, a grey car, probably belonging to one of the journalists, into which four or five of them had piled. Two photographers came out on foot and walked towards the Pont-Neuf.

A light was still on in Maigret’s office and finally it went out in its turn.

“Come here...”

He was moving slightly further away, seeking the thickest shadows. An engine was starting up in the yard and one of the little black squad cars appeared.

“That’s all right. He’s alone,” the chief-inspector said quietly.

“Who?”

“Janvier. If he hadn’t succeeded, he would have had Jave driven home or driven him home himself.”

The black car was also moving away towards the Pont-Neuf.

“There you are, young lady. It’s over.”

“Thank you, Inspector.”

“For what?”

“For everything.”

She was on the point of crying again. He walked beside her towards the Pont Saint-Michel.

“Don’t drive me home. I live almost opposite.”

“I know. Good night.”

There was a café open, at the Châtelet, and Maigret entered, sat down at one of the tables, in the almost empty room, and slowly drank a glass of beer. After that he took a taxi.

“Boulevard Richard-Lenoir. I’ll tell you where to stop.”

The boulevard was empty. He saw not a single figure on the pavement. When he climbed the last flight of stairs the door opened, as always, for Madame Maigret could tell his footsteps.

“Well?” she asked, her hair in curlers.

“It’s over.”

“Négrel?”

“Jave.”

“I wouldn’t have believed it.”

“No one’s called?”

“No.”

“Were there any journalists prowling about when you came in?”

“I took great care. I’m sure there weren’t.”

“What day is it?”

“Saturday. Or rather, as it’s half-past one in the morning, it’s Sunday.”

“Would it be a nuisance to pack a case with things for a few days?”

“When do you want to go?”

“As soon as you’re ready. Tomorrow morning, we’d be sure to be spotted.”

“I must do my hair again.”

It was half-past two, and a calm, mild night, when they came downstairs, Maigret carrying the suitcase they used for their rare week-ends away.

“Where are you thinking of going?”

“Wherever we can get in. There’s bound to be an inn somewhere, not too far from Paris, that has a room free.”

They followed the course of the Seine, by taxi, in the direction of the forest of Fontainebleau. Shortly after Corbeil, Maigret remembered an inn, at Morsang, where he had stayed during one of his cases.

“Are you going to wake them up?”

He had no plan. He didn’t know what he was going to do. He was on holiday, in earnest, this time.

And he wasn’t wrong to rely on his lucky star, for he had no need to wake up the people at the inn, where all the shutters were closed in the moonlight.

By the edge of the Seine, against a silvery scintillation, a man was busy setting eel-traps and Maigret recognized the innkeeper.

“We actually have a room empty, but it’s booked for tomorrow night.”

What did that matter? The next day, they would be free to try their luck a little further on.

As they waited for the innkeeper to rouse his wife, they remained sitting peacefully on the terrace, in front of an iron table, watching the water flowing by.

It was not until four days later, at an inn on the banks of the Loing, that Maigret received a post-card with a view of the Quai des Orfèvres. His name and address were written in block letters, and in the part reserved for the message, there were only two words:

THANKS, CHIEF

*"Golden Gate"*  
*Cannes (Alpes-Maritimes)*  
*13 September, 1956*

—<>—<>—<>—

[scanned anonymously in a galaxy far far away]

[for a complete bibliography of all 103 episodes of *The Maigret Saga*, check out [Steve Trussel's amazing fan site](http://www.trussel.com/f_maig.htm) at [http://www.trussel.com/f\\_maig.htm](http://www.trussel.com/f_maig.htm) ]

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